

## **Colonialism, Nationalism and Jewish Immigration to Palestine: Abdu'l-Bahá's Viewpoints Regarding the Middle East<sup>1</sup>**

Kamran Ekbal

2014

The Bahá'í Religion emerged during a period marking the heyday of colonialism. The Great Powers were dividing the world among themselves and more than 80% of the globe was already under colonial rule. The impact of colonialism during this period was so significant that the nineteenth century has come to be known as *The Age of Colonialism* or *The Age of Imperialism*. This same period witnessed also the birth of Zionism which eventually led to the establishment of the state of Israel and the deportation of the Palestinian people from the land of their ancestors, and the emergence of the *Middle East Crisis*.

But what do Bahá'í sources say about these two significant historical developments? Can it be that such fundamental political currents and developments in the nineteenth century have passed unnoticed, or that the sources have kept silent about them? Can it be that due to the Bahá'í principle of “non-interference in political matters” such matters may have passed without notice, or that they were avoided and no mention was ever made of them? And how can the dispersion and misery of the Palestinian people be in accordance with the “divine promises” concerning “the Restoration of the Jews in the End Times”, as some may possibly be inclined to think? Taking the continuous false accusations against the Bahá'í Faith of “subservience to imperialism” and “collaboration with Israel” into consideration, reference must be made to the clear and evident viewpoints included in Bahá'í sources regarding all of these matters.

In spite of the overwhelming abundance of such references in Bahá'í sources, research work has generally neglected these questions. Based on Tablets, Letters and Talks of Abdu'l-Bahá, this paper highlights Abdu'l-Bahá's view points regarding colonialism and the right to resist its incursions, nationhood and nationalism, as well as Jewish immigration to Palestine. Another main source is the travel-book of Dr. Zia Baghdadi in 1920 to the Holy Land, which also contains miscellaneous passages regarding the matters mentioned above. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on an important part of Bahá'í history which has been barely taken notice of and to pave the way for more substantial research in this field.

The First World War led to major changes in the political landscape of the Middle East. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and its destruction by the allies, the October Revolution in Russia and the Soviet expedition to Gilan, the British occupation of Palestine and the increasing Jewish immigration into the Holy Land, an upsurge of Arab nationalism and the struggle for the establishment of an Arab Kingdom under Feisal are the main cornerstones of the new era in the history of the Middle East. The end of Ottoman rule in Palestine brought also a period of increasing persecutions and danger for Abdu'l-Bahá and the Bahá'ís in the Holy Land to an end. Increasing numbers of visitors from East and West could now visit Abdu'l-Bahá and consult Him on diverse matters of interest. Many wrote down their memoirs and transmit thus

<sup>1</sup> A Persian version of this article, “*Abdu'l-Bahá. Mellíyyat-gará'i wa hijrat-i yahúdiyán bih Filistín*” has now been published in Iran Nameh, vol. 27, Number 4, 2012, pp. 86-119: [http://bahai-library.com/pdf/e/ekbal\\_colonialism\\_nationalism\\_palestine\\_persian.pdf](http://bahai-library.com/pdf/e/ekbal_colonialism_nationalism_palestine_persian.pdf)

a vivid picture of the topics discussed. These topics, generally concerning questions of a spiritual, metaphysical, philosophical and historical nature, of course drew also upon current events, the present and future situation of the Middle East and world affairs.

Based mainly on the unpublished memoirs of Dr. Zia Baghdadi, one of the leading Bahá'ís of the United States who visited Abdu'l-Bahá from December 1919 till August 1920, this paper will give a preview of Abdu'l-Bahá's ideas and opinions on matters concerning the affairs of the Middle East.

\* \* \*

## 1. The Penetration of the Middle East by the Great Powers in the Nineteenth Century

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 was the first major incursion of a European power into a central country of the Islamic world since the Crusades. Bonaparte's plan to intercept British communication routes to the East and to strike a decisive blow to the British possessions in India, as well as to turn Egypt into a French colony, became the starting point for the British political and economic penetration of Persia. Although a brief episode which ended in 1801 after the destruction of the French fleet by Nelson, it inaugurated an era of intensive and prolonged rivalry between Britain and France, soon to be joined by Russia, which was only interrupted, but not really terminated, by the *Entente cordiale* in 1904. It marked as well a period of cultural penetration and westernization in the Middle East and the emergence of new and modern ideologies of nationalism and political Islam or Panislamism, unknown hitherto in the region. And last but not least, Napoleon's expedition inaugurated the era of colonialism and imperialism in the Middle East and North Africa. Algeria was invaded in 1830 by French troops and was soon declared French territory and an integral part of France. Tunisia followed in 1881 and with Morocco in 1901 almost the entire Maghreb was under French colonial rule. France laid thus the foundations for its extensive domination south of the Mediterranean and built up its influence with the Maronite Christians in Lebanon. The Colonial Powers which ruled 35% of the world in 1814, brought 85% of the globe under their control by 1914.<sup>2</sup>

To the British, on the other hand, the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean and Persia served mainly their strategic, commercial and imperial interests in securing the routes to India. The occupation of Aden in 1839 was thus an exception to this general rule, necessitated by its strategic importance in controlling the Red Sea route to the East.

After the expulsion of Napoleon's troops from Egypt by a combined British-Ottoman operation in 1801, Egypt underwent under Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805-48) a period of comprehensive reforms. The elimination of the Mamluk feudal lords, the confiscation of their lands and the establishment of a state-controlled monopoly of the chief products, mainly cotton, enabled the enlightened ruler to initiate an extensive program of socio-economic change. Industries flourished, military and medical academies were established, students were sent abroad to study in Paris, a modern army was built up with the help of French Saint-Simonians and the Egyptian navy soon surpassed the Ottoman navy which controlled the Eastern Mediterranean. His troops were now essentially involved in putting down the Wahhabis of Arabia and the Greek uprisings against the Ottomans and soon recaptured Athens. The progress of Egypt during this period put it on the same level with countries such as Ireland and Japan.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Said: *Orientalism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978, p.41.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Schölch: "*Der arabische Osten im neunzehnten Jahrhundert 1800-1914*", in: *Geschichte der Arabischen Welt*, herausgegeben von Ulrich Haarmann, C.H.Beck, München 1991, pp. 365-431, here p.367;

The idea of nationalism and Arab nationhood which started to manifest itself during the *Nahda* (renaissance of Arab language and literature in the second part of the century) had its beginnings in the reforms of Muhammad Ali. When Egyptian troops occupied Syria and Palestine in 1831, a prerequisite to the unification and independence of the region, and his army pushed forward to the gates of Constantinople, a joint military intervention of the Powers succored the Ottomans, preventing the downfall of their empire and bringing the process of rapid modernization in Egypt to an abrupt end. Egypt which was traditionally considered to be the granary of the Middle East and used to export grain to France prior to Napoleon's expedition, turned into a nation dependent on the importation of wheat. After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 - one year after the deportation of Bahá'u'lláh from Adrianople to Akka - British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli secured for Britain in 1875 total control when he acquired the Khedive's holding of the Canal shares and with this *coup* threw France out of the game. The rising debts of the new rulers of Egypt led eventually to the establishment of dual control by Britain and France in 1879 and to rising anti-European feelings among the population, led by the Egyptian colonel Ahmad Urabi. The British bombardment of Alexandria and the defeat of Urabi's troops in 1882 paved the way for the British occupation of the country in the same year. Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islam, the leading ideologies of that period, gave rise to the principle of self-determination and the struggle for independence from foreign rule. A new nationalist uprising in 1919 by Sa'd Zaghlul, a follower of Urabi and a student of the Pan-Islamist Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, was crushed by the British and the fiery lawyer who had wished to carry the wishes of his people for independence together with a delegation of Egyptian notables (*wafd*) to the Peace Conference in Paris was exiled to Malta. But the subjugation and the colonial strangulation of the East never succeeded without resistance: From the uprisings of Abd al-Qadir al-Jazá'irí (1833-47) and the Berbers of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco against the French and Spaniards, to the movement of the Mahdi of Sudan and up to the struggle of Urabi and Zaghlul in Egypt, anti-colonial sentiments never ceased.<sup>4</sup> In those days, unlike today, Arab independence movements were viewed with great sympathy by the people in Europe and the USA. The declaration of jihad against French colonial rule by the Algerian leader Abd al-Qádir al-Jazá'irí, designated by the Americans as "George Washington of the Arabs", made them establish a new city which carries his name ever since.<sup>5</sup> This happened in the same country witnessing today an upsurge of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim feelings, where people at that time remembered with great appreciation that Morocco was the very first country to recognize the independence of the USA from British colonial rule.

## 2. Western Penetration of Iran

In Iran it was British-Russian rivalry that transformed the Qajar monarchy *de facto* into a semi-colony. The policy of granting concessions to British and Russian subjects represented nothing less than an almost full-scale sell out of the country and its resources to Western subjects and to foreign enterprises. From the telegraph-convention in 1862 to the far-reaching Baron de Reuter concession in 1872 regarding railways and roads, irrigation works and the

---

Afaf Lutfí al-Sayyid Marsot: *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1984, pp.162ff; Kamran Ekbal: "*tajaddud dar misr wa Iran dar qarn-i núzdahum-i miládí dar rábita bá fikr-i Bábí wa Bahá'í*", in: Khúsha-há'í az Kharman-i Adab wa Hunar 16, 2008, pp. 168-194

<sup>4</sup> Albert Hourani: *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Harvard University Press and Warner Books, Cambridge, Mass. 1991, pp.265-298; *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, edited by P.M.Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1970, pp. 385 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Elkader, Iowa, USA.

establishment of a national bank which had to be cancelled under heavy pressure from the Russian government. The new de-Reuter concession in 1889 for the establishment of the Imperial Bank of Persia and the following grant of the tobacco monopoly in 1889 to a British subject gave rise to a broad popular movement lead by the *ulema*. Frightened by the extent of the agitation, Nasir al-Din Shah (1848-1896) was forced to cancel the concession in the following year. An onerous agreement had to be signed now with de Reuter's Imperial Bank in 1892, secured only with the receipts of the customs of the Persian Gulf.

The cultural contacts with the West during this period marked nevertheless a break with the past. Like the *nahda* in the Arab East, also in Iran an epoch of enlightenment ensued. Demands for the rule of justice, a code of laws and the overthrow of tyranny were on the rise. Beside the secret societies, the *anjomans*, secularist intellectuals and sections of the religious classes, Babis and Bahais and the ideas disseminated by them played a decisive role in the awakening of Iranians to the needs of the day, i.e. liberal reforms and the struggle for a constitution. Abdu'l-Bahá was Himself authoritative in His call for the awakening of Persia:

*“O people of Persia! How long will your torpor and lethargy last? You were once the lords of the whole earth; the world was at your beck and call. How is it that your glory has lapsed and you have fallen from favor now, and crept away into some corner of oblivion? You were the fountainhead of learning, the unfailing spring of light for all the earth, how is it that you are withered now, and quenched, and faint of heart? You who once lit the world, how is it that you lurk, inert, bemused, in darkness now? Open your mind's eye, see your great and present need. Rise up and struggle, seek education, seek enlightenment. Is it meet that a foreign people should receive from your own forbears its culture and its knowledge, and that you, their blood, their rightful heirs, should go without?”<sup>6</sup>*

He encouraged the peoples of the East to approach the West and learn the modern sciences from them. To Him the main reason for the progress of the Europeans was their willingness to accept the truth, even if it was not in conformity with their beliefs. Freedom of speech is what Abdu'l-Bahá highlights here. In one of His talks in the US He declares:

*“[Here] conscientious opinion has free sway. Every religion and every religious aspiration may be freely voiced and expressed here. Just as in the world of politics there is need for free thought, likewise in the world of religion there should be the right of unrestricted individual belief. Consider what a vast difference exists between modern democracy and the old forms of despotism. Under an autocratic government the opinions of men are not free, and development is stifled, whereas in democracy, because thought and speech are not restricted, the greatest progress is witnessed. It is likewise true in the world of religion. When freedom of conscience, liberty of thought and right of speech prevail—that is to say, when every man according to his own idealization may give expression to his beliefs—development and growth are inevitable.”<sup>7</sup>*

He points to the fact that Europeans were even prepared to publish His speeches in their newspapers, even though they did not agree with His views:

<sup>6</sup> Abdu'l-Bahá: The Secret of Divine Revelation, US Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1990,(Bahá'í Reference Library, henceforth BRL) p. 91

<sup>7</sup> Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1982, p. 197

”There is one thing which has been the cause of the progress of the Europeans, and that is their readiness to accept truth after investigation and declaration of the facts, even if this was in opposition to their own opinion. They never remonstrate, but accept the facts. When I visited the University of Oxford which is very famous and the first of its kind in the world, I gave a speech to the professors there. They [even] published my speech in the university journal and in the Christian Commonwealth.”<sup>8</sup>  
(own translation)<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately this freedom of thought and speech sometimes does not even prevail in the Bahá’í community. With growing restriction of the views expressed by an author, which many consider to be censorship, development and growth will remain, according to Abdu’l-Bahá Himself, obstructed. Restricting freedom of speech may also lead, intentionally or unintentionally, to a manipulation of the history of the Faith. Concerning *taqiyya*, dissimulation, e.g. Bahá’í publications keep reporting incorrectly and most probably due to the ignorance of the authors, that “Bahá’ís do not dissimulate” and that it is the others who “practice lying and dissimulation”.<sup>9</sup> They mention with great contempt that “the culture of religious imitation (*taqlíd*), false piety (*ta’abbud*) and dissimulation (*taqiyya*)” results in “metamorphosing and deformation of the personality” of the people.<sup>10</sup> Authors who on the other hand want to show that *taqiyya* had been established by Bahá’u’lláh in His Tablets and maintained also by Abdu’l-Bahá in His Writings, and that it was first prohibited by Shoghi Efendi, are hindered to do so. An important period of Bahá’í history, when *taqiyya*, on the basis of Bahá’u’lláh’s and Abdu’l-Bahá’s own statements,<sup>11</sup> was legally practiced and wide spread among Bahá’ís, is thus consigned to oblivion and gets forged.<sup>12</sup> Putting *taqiyya* on the same level as lying and false piety or deformation of personality, which evolves from the ignorance of the authors, leads eventually to the assumption that Bahá’u’lláh, wishing to “deform and metamorphose the personality” of His adherents, had called upon them to abide by “lying and false piety”! Ignorance about basics and details of the Bahá’í principles can even lead to disastrous results, for example when *Payám-i Bahá’í*, the main Persian Bahá’í organ, writes in its editorial that “Islam could have reached Iran and other countries without need to all those invasions, troops and bloodshed...but unfortunately war and strife was given preference for its spreading abroad.”<sup>13</sup> Such opinions nowadays might be considered “modern”; they may also be an imitation of anti-Islamic criticisms brought up against Islam from its very beginnings in the West, but they have nothing to do with basic Bahá’í beliefs. Ignorance of the immense glorification of the early wars of Islamic expansion in Bahá’í Scriptural Writings, to which reference will be made later, not only distorts and humiliates a significant part of the history of Islam, but also leads to false assumptions concerning a presumed hostility of Bahá’ís towards Islam and delivers unfounded arguments into the hands of the opponents of the Faith.

<sup>8</sup> Habib Mu’ayyad: *Khatirát-i Habíb*, Bahá’í National Publishing Trust, (Tehran) 125 BA, p. 306

<sup>9</sup> Nader Saidi: “*Bahá’í-setízi va ittihám-i Bahá’íyán be jásúsi*”, in: *Payám-i Bahá’í* 357, August/September 2009, pp. 25-30, p.30, etc. etc.

<sup>10</sup> Saleh Mowlavinejad: “*Mo’arrefi-i kitáb*”, in: *Payám-i Bahá’í* 365, April 2010, pp. 50-51, p.51

<sup>11</sup> “*The law of taqiyya has been ordained*”, in: Amr va Khalq, vol. 3, compiled by Fazel Mazandarani, Langenhain 1986, p.118 etc, etc., “*abide by taqiyya*”, Abdu’l-Bahá: *Makátíb*, vol. 3, Farjallah Dhaki Printing Press,( Cairo) 1921, p.325 etc, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Kamran Ekbal: “*taqiyya und kitmán in den Bábi und Bahá’í Religionen*“, in: *Akten des 27. Deutschen Orientalistentages. Norm und Abweichung*, herausgegeben von Stefan Wild und Hartmut Schild, Ergon Verlag, Würzburg 2001, pp. 363-372; Kamran Ekbal: “*taqiyyah, sitr wa kitmán dar diyánat-há-i Bábi wa Bahá’í*“, in: *Iran Nameh*, vol. 28, Number 3, Autumn 2013, pp. 170-193

<sup>13</sup> Hushang Khazrá’í: “*Bar’ámadan-i sitára-i sepide-dam-i rúz-i khodá*”, in: *Payám-i Bahá’í* 371, October 2010, pp. 2,8-10, here p.10

Whereas Abdu'l-Bahá often called to turn towards the West and learn useful sciences there, He also warned against imitating the West.<sup>14</sup>

Growing unrest finally forced the ailing Muzaffar al-Din Shah (1896-1906) to yield to the demands and sign the royal decree setting up a National Consultative Assembly. The constitution passed in the first session of parliament was signed on 30 December 1906 by the shah a few days before he died. During the despotic reign of his son Muhammad Ali Shah (1907-1909) the country dropped to the abyss. The British-Russian treaty of 1907 partitioned Persia into zones of influence of the two empires and the despotic monarch ordered the bombardment of the parliament building in 1908. The Persian constitutional revolution led finally to the deposition of the king and enthronement of his infant son Ahmad (1909-1921/25). During this period of the so-called *pénétration pacifique*, the technical term used euphemistically in contemporary Western works, the land was subjugated by the Western Powers and lost its sovereignty and its natural resources.

Widespread corruption and the decline of the social and political structure of state and society were the prerequisites for what has come to be termed *the strangling of Persia*, after William Morgan Shuster, the American Treasurer-General who came in 1911 to Persia to manage its finances.<sup>15</sup> The deplorable situation of the Middle Eastern countries was the immediate matter of the day and Abdu'l-Bahá was not committing himself to silence.

### 3. Abdu'l-Bahá's Views on Colonialism

Like His Father who had addressed the kings and rulers of the world in lengthy letters, Tablets, summoning them to disarmament and international agreement, Abdu'l-Bahá had striven throughout His entire life to proclaim the oneness of mankind and promulgate the message for Universal Peace.

For Abdu'l-Bahá liberty is an essential precondition to Universal Peace. "*Liberalism is essential in this day – justice and equity toward all nations and people.*"<sup>16</sup> As will be seen, denying the rights of the peoples of North Africa and Palestine was criticized and condemned openly by Him.

In a talk held at a gathering of Black Americans in Washington D.C. He reiterated that "*in this human world there is no greater blessing than **liberty**. You do not know. I, who for forty years have been a prisoner, do know. I do know the value and blessing of liberty. For you have been and are now living in freedom, and you have no fear of anybody. Is there a greater blessing than this? **Freedom! Liberty! Security!** These are the great bestowals of God. Therefore, praise ye God! I will now pray in your behalf*".<sup>17</sup>

Like His Father Abdu'l-Bahá was also a keen observer of political developments in the world. He felt painfully the impact of the onslaught of the imperialist powers. In a letter addressed

<sup>14</sup> Makátib III:314f

<sup>15</sup> William Morgan Shuster: *The Strangling of Persia*. Story of the European diplomacy and Oriental intrigue that resulted in the denationalization of twelve million Muhammedans. Personal narrative, (New York)1939, repr. 1968

<sup>16</sup> Promulgation, p. 390 (emphasis here and elsewhere in the text from K.Ekbal)

<sup>17</sup> Promulgation 52

probably to Gabriel (Jubran) Sacy, a Bahá'í Frenchman of Syrian origin who in 1901 had carried messages from Abdu'l-Bahá to the Russian philosopher Tolstoy, He calls upon him:

*“Speak thou then to that honorable gentleman [i.e. Tolstoy] and tell him: For several centuries the West has been now **attacking the East like bandits** (satá) with its armies and cavalries and has not stopped yet. And it is going to continue this assault with all troops at its disposal until Doomsday. You observe the large armies impetuously assaulting like lions from the woods of the Western world onto the battlefields of the East. Among these are **an army of finance** (tharwa), **an army of industries** (saná`a), **an army of commerce** (tijára), **an army of politics** (siyása), **an army of knowledge** (ma`árif) and **an army of discoveries** (iktisháfát), numerous soldiers loaded with war materiel, assaulting from the West with their sharp and deadly weapons and conquering the East in all its parts. Among these recent conquests you will find vast regions of China whereas the East has remained ever incapable of putting up **resistance** against these assaulting armies and innumerable vanquishing soldiers. Wise men know the consequences of such a great matter and need no proof hereto. So ponder thee, thou illustrious sire, upon the bad consequences of the matter. Can ye imagine safeguarding the East against the assaults from the West in future times through such instruments as prudence, wise administration and Politics, even if they were carried in utmost perfection? No, never, by my gracious God! On the contrary! Matters are in great danger. And therefore the people of the East must ponder on how they may find effective means to safeguard their grandeur, their honor, their independence and their good reputation from the disorderly hands from the West. Without doubt all devices are non-existent and all means lost except for divine power, heavenly force, God-given authority and divine valor. It is only this power which is capable of resisting all assaults and dispersing all troops, breaking the fronts of all contumacious adversaries and defeating all armies **in the same manner as in the early centuries [of Islam].**”*

Abdu'l-Bahá alludes then to Jesus Christ whose words had conquered the West and subdued its people to the Word of God coming to them from the East, although He was all alone and without any help or succor.<sup>18</sup> (own translation)

It is evident that Abdu'l-Bahá is not referring in this letter to colonial invasions merely in the military sense of the word, like e.g. the French occupation of North Africa or the British occupation of Egypt, but, even if He makes no use of the term, to imperialism in the full sense of its meaning, which includes political, cultural (army of knowledge and discoveries), commercial, industrial, and mainly financial penetration or capital transfer (army of finance). The description given here is a fine recapitulation of the strangulation of Persia in the nineteenth century by the Great Powers, and of the political and economic penetration of the Ottoman Empire and of Egypt prior to 1882. It is also a precise picture of the political situation of the world today. That Abdu'l-Bahá's perception is that of a continuous financial warfare launched by imperialism against poor countries is also evident in other sections of His talks: *“At this time the states are continuously engaged in increasing their war preparations. Although superficially looked upon there seems to be no war, **but in reality it is a continuous financial warfare** (harb-i da`imí-i máli).”*(own translation)<sup>19</sup> In this Abdu'l-Bahá is in full

<sup>18</sup> Abd al-Husain Áwáreh: al-Kawákib al-durriyyah fi ma`áthir al-bahá'íyyah, vol.2, Matba'at al-Sa`áadah, (Cairo)1914, pp.67f. In regard to the Tablets to Tolstoy see: Luigi Stendardo: Leo Tolstoy and the Bahá'í Faith, George Ronald, Oxford 1985, pp.22ff.; Moojan Momen(ed.): The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944, George Ronald, Oxford 1981, pp.54f

<sup>19</sup> Majmú`a-i Khitábát-i Hazrat-i Abdu'l-Bahá, 3 volumes in 1, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Langenhain 1984,

conformity to His Father, who had also censured Western colonialism in clear terms: *“In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess it will prove a source of evil. Consider the civilization of the West, how it hath agitated and alarmed the peoples of the world. An infernal engine hath been devised, and hath proved so cruel a weapon of destruction that it’s like none hath ever witnessed or heard”*<sup>20</sup>

Two other important aspects of Abdu’l-Bahá’s letter to Tolstoy are the comparison to the period of the early expansions of Islam, held in high esteem by Him, as well as to recent happenings in China and the invasion of its territories by the British in the second part of the nineteenth century. As we shall see, Abdu’l-Bahá continuously and in unequivocal terms refers in His letters and speeches, as well as in the evening gatherings at His home, to the political affairs of the day, such as the Balkan wars, and to the confrontation with the Colonial Powers, such as the Italian invasion of Tripolitania, and to the Jewish colonial projects in Palestine. To Him Europe, in spite of its great material progress, lacks spirituality. It is a “dark continent” (*tárik*) reigned by the principle of “struggle for existence” (*munáza`a-i dar baqá*) and committed only to renewing its weapons and increasing its arsenals of highly explosive materials.<sup>21</sup>

Again and again He points to the fact that Europe has turned to a “*storehouse of explosives ... bent upon conquest of territory*”:

*“Europe is a storehouse of explosives awaiting a spark. All the European nations are on edge, and a single flame will set on fire the whole of that continent. Implements of war and death are multiplied and increased to an inconceivable degree, and the burden of military maintenance is taxing the various countries beyond the point of endurance. Armies and navies devour the substance and possessions of the people; the toiling poor, the innocent and helpless are forced by taxation to provide munitions and armament for governments bent upon conquest of territory and defense against powerful rival nations.”*<sup>22</sup>

He points out that in past days there were no cannons made by Krupp and no Mauser guns, no armored warships and no torpedo boats, but that now with the progress of materialist civilization, all of Europe was filled with ignitable, deadly weapons, capable of destroying the whole planet.<sup>23</sup>

Abdu’l-Bahá was also critical of the radical forms of patriotism and nationalism prevailing in Europe which would ultimately lead to warfare and conquest: *“Governments, for instance, consider militarism as the step to human progress, that division among men and nations is the cause of patriotism and honor, that if one nation attack and conquer another, gaining wealth, territory and glory thereby, this warfare and conquest, this bloodshed and cruelty are the cause of that victorious nation’s advancement and prosperity. This is an utter mistake.”*<sup>24</sup>

III:37f.( 713f.)

<sup>20</sup> *Kalimát-i Firdausiyyih*, in: Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i Aqdas, US Bahá’í Publishing Trust 1988 (BRL), p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> Majmu`a-i Khitábát III:49/ 725, 106 (own translation)

<sup>22</sup> Promulgation 317. For “storehouse of explosives” cf. also Mahmúd Zarfání: *Badáyiü’l-Áthár*, 2 vols., 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed., Bahá’í Publishing Trust, Langenhain 1982, II:40; Makátib III:12, 197; Makátib IV:115, Majmu`a-i Khatábát 200, 373, 716, 719, 725 etc.

<sup>23</sup> Majmmú`a-i Khitábát I:194 .Cf. also Zarfání II:40

<sup>24</sup> Promulgation 156f



He was distressed to see nationalism spreading in Europe in an awesome way among its peoples, giving a taste of the disasters still ahead: “*When I was in Europe,*” He exclaims, “*every people was crying ‘fatherland, fatherland, fatherland’. I told them: ‘Dear me! What is the matter? Where does this entire clamor come from? This home-country for which you are crying and shouting so much is on the earth. This is the home-country of man. Whoever lives somewhere, that place is his home-country. God has not divided up this earth. It is one planet. These boundaries that you have declared are pure imagination. They are not real. It is as if you draw lines in this room and say that one half is now Germany and the other half England and France. Imaginary lines which do not exist.’*” (own translation)<sup>25</sup>

“*This idea of fatherland (watan),*” He declares on another occasion, “*if it should remain within such a narrow circle, it will become the first and utmost cause for the destruction of the world. No rational and just person would accept such superstitions.*” (own translation)<sup>26</sup>

Abdu’l-Bahá declares Europe to be “*morally uncivilized*” and its military superiority only “*transient*” and asks:

“*Is it right and proper that peoples among whom, diametrically opposed to the most desirable human behavior, such horrors take place, should dare lay claim to a real and adequate civilization? Especially when out of all this no results can be hoped for except the winning of a transient victory; and since this outcome never endures, it is, to the wise, not worth the effort.*”<sup>27</sup>

Its people seek only to conquer and annihilate one another while cunningly they pretend friendship and affection to each other:

“*The peoples of Europe have not advanced to the higher planes of moral civilization, as their opinions and behavior clearly demonstrate. Notice, for example, how the supreme desire of European governments and peoples today is to conquer and crush one another, and how, while harboring the greatest secret repulsion, they spend their time exchanging expressions of neighborly affection, friendship and harmony.*”<sup>28</sup>

Again He reiterates that Europe has only made progress in material aspects, not in moral and spiritual matters.<sup>29</sup>

#### **4. Resistance to Colonialism Justified by Abdu’l-Bahá**

To Abdu’l-Baha bloodshed and warfare must be repudiated as a matter of principle. “*War is death, but peace is life*”<sup>30</sup> He keeps reiterating time and again. “*War is the mortal plague (áfat) of humanity.*”<sup>31</sup> “*All nations must disarm simultaneously*”, He exclaims in an interview

<sup>25</sup> Majmú`a-i Khitábát III:39(715); cf. also Min Makátíb Abdu’l-Bahá, Brazil 1982, I:213

<sup>26</sup> Makát`ib III:105; cf. also Min Makátíb I:213

<sup>27</sup> Secret 63

<sup>28</sup> Secret 61

<sup>29</sup> Majmú`a-i Khatábát I:100(107). On Abdu'l Bahá's views about the West and politics in general see Necati Alkan: “*The Young Turks and the Baha'is in Palestine*”, in: Y.B.-B and E. Ginio (eds.): Late Ottoman Palestine. The Period of Young Turc Rule, I.B.Tauris, London 2011, pp. 258-278

<sup>30</sup> Makátíb III:101, 259, 270, 284, 364 etc.

<sup>31</sup> Majmú`a-i Khitábát III:44(720)

with a Canadian newspaper in 1912. He even goes so far as to exclaim that “*The very armaments themselves are productive of war.*”<sup>32</sup>

But there are **exceptions** to this rule, e.g. when the country faces foreign invasion. In *The Secret of Divine Civilization* He recounts how the Mongolian conquerors Hulagu and Tamerlane had seized the whole of Asia, whereas Alexander the Great and Napoleon I. had “*stretched their arrogant fists over three of the earth’s five continents.*”<sup>33</sup> In strong terms Abdu’l-Bahá condemns here Napoleon’s campaigns of 1798 and 1799 against Egypt and Palestine (Akka) describing this as stretching his “arrogant fists” to gain control of these parts of the Middle East. The original Arabic and Persian term, *taṭáwul*, implies more plainly “usurpation” and “exercise of tyranny and oppression”, a clear indication of Abdu’l-Bahá’s great indignation of foreign and colonial assaults.

In another part of the same treatise Abdu’l-Bahá even exclaims that a war for the unification of the country or to resist aggressors and insurgents must be considered a praiseworthy “*war for a righteous purpose*”. In this He comes very close to the ancient concept of *bellum iustum*. Thus one may consider the struggle of Saladin to drive back the Crusaders and their “*unnumbered armies (which) fell upon Syria and Egypt*” in the Middle Ages, till “*hopelessly beaten, they went back to Europe*”, as one example for such a just war.<sup>34</sup> According to Abdu’l-Bahá, a war fought against an insurgent and an aggressor to attain freedom and liberty for the people and the country must thus be considered a “just war”.

“*A conquest can be a praiseworthy thing,*” He observes, “*and there are times when war becomes the powerful basis of peace, and ruin the very means of reconstruction. If, for example, a high-minded sovereign marshals his troops to block the onset of the insurgent and the aggressor, or again, if he takes the field and distinguishes himself in a struggle to unify a divided state and people, if, in brief, he is waging war for a righteous purpose, then this seeming wrath is mercy itself, and this apparent tyranny the very substance of justice and this warfare the cornerstone of peace.*”<sup>35</sup>

The right of waging a just war was laid down by Bahá’u’lláh in His *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*: “Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.” (K 88)

In other instances too Abdu’l-Bahá refers to the Crusader kings whom He regards as forerunners of the modern Western insurgents: “*One of the greatest religious wars, the Crusades, extended over a period of two hundred years. In this succession of great campaigns the western crusaders were constantly invading the Orient, bent upon recovering the Holy City from the hands of the Islamic people. Army after army raised in Europe poured its fanatical legions into the East. The kings of European nations personally led these Crusades, killing and shedding the blood of the Orientals. During this period of two hundred years the East and West were in a state of violence and commotion. Sometimes the crusaders were successful, killing, pillaging and taking captive the Muslim people; sometimes the Muslims were victorious, inflicting bloodshed, death and ruin in turn upon the invaders. So they continued for two centuries, alternately fighting with fury and relaxing from weakness, until the European religionists withdrew from the East, leaving ashes of desolation behind them*

<sup>32</sup> H.M. Balyuzi: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh, George Ronald, Oxford 1987, p. 258

<sup>33</sup> Secret 67

<sup>34</sup> Secret 90; Makátib III:220f.

<sup>35</sup> Secret 70f.

*and finding their own nations in a condition of turbulence and upheaval. Hundreds of thousands of human beings were killed and untold wealth wasted in this fruitless religious warfare. How many fathers mourned the loss of their sons! How many mothers and wives lamented the absence of their dear ones! Yet this was only one of the “holy” wars. Consider and reflect.”*<sup>36</sup>

The right to resist aggression and defend ones own self and family in case of danger is confirmed by Abdu’l-Bahá in many of His writings. For Him it is *“improper to behave with kindness towards an aggressor, a traitor or a thief, since kindness would be a cause for (greater) sedition and transgressions (ṭughyán) on his part and not a lesson to take warning from (intibáh).”* (own translation)<sup>37</sup>

In *Some Answered Questions* He refers to Christ’s rule of forgiveness and observes: *“He did not mean that, if a wolf should fall upon a flock of sheep and wish to destroy it, the wolf should be encouraged to do so. No, if Christ had known that a wolf had entered the fold and was about to destroy the sheep, most certainly He would have prevented it.”*<sup>38</sup> He then goes on: *“The continuance of mankind depends upon justice and not upon forgiveness. So if, at present, the law of pardon were practiced in all countries, in a short time the world would be disordered, and the foundations of human life would crumble. For example, if the governments of Europe had not withstood the notorious Attila, he would not have left a single living man.”* Concluding He maintains that under special conditions even He Himself could be compelled to resist an aggressor personally:

*“To recapitulate: the constitution of the communities depends upon justice, not upon forgiveness. Then what Christ meant by forgiveness and pardon is not that, when nations attack you, burn your homes, plunder your goods, assault your wives, children and relatives, and violate your honor, you should be submissive in the presence of these tyrannical foes and allow them to perform all their cruelties and oppressions. No, the words of Christ refer to the conduct of two individuals toward each other: if one person assaults another, the injured one should forgive him. But the communities must protect the rights of man. So if someone assaults, injures, oppresses and wounds me, I will offer no resistance, and I will forgive him. But if a person wishes to assault Siyyid Manshadi, certainly I will prevent him. Although for the malefactor noninterference is apparently a kindness, it would be an oppression to Manshadi. If at this moment a wild Arab were to enter this place with a drawn sword, wishing to assault, wound and kill you, most assuredly I would prevent him. If I abandoned you to the Arab, that would not be justice but injustice. But if he injure me personally, I would forgive him.”*<sup>39</sup>

Discussing the criticisms in regard to Muhammad’s use of force as a Prophet of God, Abdu’l-Bahá exclaims: *“If Christ Himself had been placed in such circumstances among such tyrannical and barbarous tribes, and if for thirteen years He with His disciples had endured all these trials with patience, culminating in flight from His native land—if in spite of this these lawless tribes continued to pursue Him, to slaughter the men, to pillage their property, and to capture their women and children—what would have been Christ’s conduct with regard to them? If this oppression had fallen only upon Himself, He would have forgiven them, and such an act of forgiveness would have been most praiseworthy; but if He had seen*

<sup>36</sup> Promulgation 265

<sup>37</sup> Makátib III:211

<sup>38</sup> Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, U.S. Bahá’í Publishing Trust 1990 (BRL), p.270

<sup>39</sup> *Some Answered Questions* pp. 270f.

*that these cruel and bloodthirsty murderers wished to kill, to pillage and to injure all these oppressed ones, and to take captive the women and children, it is certain that He would have protected them and would have resisted the tyrants.”*<sup>40</sup>

On many different occasions Abdu'l-Bahá stresses the right of resistance: “*So if a man is greedy to acquire science and knowledge, or to become compassionate, generous and just, it is most praiseworthy. If he exercises his anger and wrath against the bloodthirsty tyrants who are like ferocious beasts, it is very praiseworthy.*”<sup>41</sup>

Probably this is an explanation of the fact that Abdu'l-Bahá did not deny Ihsánu'lláh Khan Dustdar, the renown Bahá'í Marxist commander of the revolutionary Iranian forces who together with Soviet troops marched into Northern Iran in June 1920 to establish the legendary Socialist Soviet Republic of Iran in Gilan 1920-1921, His support, but gave him moral assistance and the right to carry on with his scheme. For Abdu'l-Bahá this was nothing else than praiseworthy resistance to the tyrannical and corrupt political system in Iran. The short-lived Soviet-republic in Gilan was brought to an end through a joint British-Persian operation. The commander of the royalist troops, Reza Khan, was soon able to gain the throne and as Reza Shah became the founder of the short-lived Pahlavi dynasty.<sup>42</sup>

The critical views which Abdu'l-Bahá adopts in regard to colonialism and colonial incursions explain on the other hand why He favored the United States and blessed her so exceptionally. At the beginning of the century and especially during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson when the right of the peoples of the world for self-determination was aired, many oppressed people under colonial rule looked up to America as a country supporting the idea of liberty in the world and willing to support the wish of peoples for independence and national sovereignty. They considered the United States to be a rising power without colonial aspirations – which was of course not completely true. Addressing a meeting of International Peace Forum in New York on 12 May 1912 Abdu'l-Bahá observes:

*“Therefore, it is my hope that, inasmuch as the standard of international peace must be upraised, it may be upraised upon this continent, for this nation is more deserving and has greater capacity for such an initial step than any other. If other nations should attempt to do this, the motive would be misunderstood. For instance, if Great Britain should declare for international peace, it would be said that it has been done to ensure the safety of her colonies. If France should hoist the standard, other nations would declare some hidden diplomatic policy underlies the action; Russia would be suspected of national designs if the first step were taken by that people, and so on with all the European and eastern governments. But the United States of America could not be accused of any such selfish interest. Your government has, strictly speaking, no colonies to protect. You are not endeavoring to extend your domain, nor have you need of territorial expansion. Therefore, if America takes the first step toward establishing world peace, it is certain to be ascribed to unselfishness and altruism. The world will say, ‘There is no other motive than altruism and service to humanity in this action by the United States.’”*

<sup>40</sup> Some Answered Questions p. 20

<sup>41</sup> Some Answered Questions p.215/ An-núr al-abhá fí mufáwadáat Àbdu'l-Bahá. Guftégú bar sar-i náhár, ba-ihitimám-i Clifford Barney, Brill, Leiden 1908 (mufavidat) p. 163f

<sup>42</sup> Kamran Ekbal: “*Ihsánu'lláh Khán Dústdár, die Kaukasischen Revolutionäre und die Gründung der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepublik Iran 1920-1921*“, in: Osmanismus, Nationalismus und der Kaukasus. Muslime und Christen, Türken und Armenier im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, hg. Von Fikret Adanir und Bernd Bonwetsch, Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 2005, S.237-252.

In the Persian text the central idea of the speech is much clearer: *“It is evident that the U.S. government and the American people both have neither colonial ambitions, nor do they nourish plans in regard to the expansion of their domains. They are by no means on the threshold to attack other nations or countries.”* (own translation)<sup>43</sup>

Abdu’l-Baha was so full of admiration for the selflessness of the USA in all matters that He even predicted in a speech given on 3 June 1913 at the summer resort of Milford, USA, contained in the Persian and Arabic compilations of His speeches, but omitted from the English translation, that the USA *“will not take part in the coming War because this War will take place in Europe, whereas you [Americans] in this corner of the world do not interfere in other peoples matters and because you have no ambitions whatsoever to gain possession of Europe. Furthermore you feel safe here, since you have the Atlantic Ocean as a strong natural fortress.”* (own translation)<sup>44</sup>

In later times when He learned of American ambitions in Cuba and the war with Spain 1898 which resulted in the occupation of the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guam, He sounded much more reserved. Regarding the British war against the Ottoman Empire He now praised the Arabs and their methods of warfare during the early ages of Islam and said: *“This war going on now is not a war. It is deceit (khidá’). This bloodshed is only because of fraud and deception, because everything is reduced to the use of war-machines and instruments of war. If it would have been fought with swords, Muslims would have conquered the world. The courage of the Muslims is well-known. But today, what is taking place is not war. All depends now on war-machines and instruments of war. In the last battles between America and Spain, not even one American was killed. Nevertheless they were victorious, although none of them was even wounded.”* (own translation)<sup>45</sup>

From the paragraph above it becomes quite evident that the wars of the Colonial Powers, who monopolize all tools and weapons of war against the poor countries in the world, are not a manly way of warfare. Abdu’l-Bahá praises here the wars fought by the Arabs in the early days of Islam, where they were capable, with swords in their hands and the light of Islam in their hearts, to conquer the world. That war was courage and manliness, this war deceit and fraud. A war in which one side drops tons and tons of Bombs on Gaza in 2008/09 killing 1400 people and losing only 12 or 13 is not a “war”, but like in the Spanish-American war of 1898 and 1908/09, mass murder. It is *“fraud and deception”*.

The remarks quoted in the paragraph above seem to be a turning point in Abdu’l-Bahá’s views on America.

## 5. Obedience to the Government and the Question of Political Activities

It is obvious from what has been said that Abdu’l-Bahá was critical of all forms of oppression and colonial intervention and supported, in one way or the other, the right to resist such oppression. He, like His Father, was a commentator on political issues of the day – starting from the political affairs of Persia and the Ottoman Empire, to the Balkan wars, the invasion of China and the Italian occupation of Libya, and from His remarks on the violent methods

<sup>43</sup> Promulgation 121 f.; Majmu’a-i Khitabat II: 69 f.(372)

<sup>44</sup> Majmu’a-i Khitábát II:118f.(421f.); Khuṭab Abdu’l-Bahá fi Úrúba wa Amriká, Dár al-Riḥání, Beirut 1972, p.296(305)

<sup>45</sup> Mu’ayyad 295; cf. Also the chapter on the World War

used by paramilitary Zionist units in uprooting Palestinians, up to the support given by Him to Ihsánu’-lláh Khan Dustdar and the project of a Soviet-republic in Gilan. But where does all this correspond to the Bahá’í principle of non-interference in political matters? Generally Bahá’ís are admonished against political activities of any kind. Nevertheless to every rule there is an **exception**.

In reply to an enquiry from a Western Bahá’í regarding obedience in the case of an oppressive government, Abdu’l-Bahá limits this to obedience to just governments: “*You asked in your letter, how could it be that an unjust government should be obeyed and cooperation with it continued. What was meant with ‘governments of various kinds’ (hukúmat-i mutanawwi`ah) is [only in regard to] a just government (hukúmat-i `ádilah) which upholds the rights of all people, and [only in regard to] a constitutional government (hukúmat-i mashrúṭah) which abides to firm and solid laws.*” (own translation)<sup>46</sup>

According to this paragraph obedience is not only limited by Abdu’l-Bahá to just and constitutional governments which abide to solid laws and serve all people, but even cooperation with unjust and tyrannical governments is rejected. The Persian monarch Nasiruddin Shah e.g. is usually designated a “tyrant” in Bahá’í Writings,<sup>47</sup> which may explain why Ihsánu’-lláh Khan’s armed resistance to the tyrannical rule of the Kadjars was supported by Abdu’l-Bahá. Thus Abdu’l-Bahá admonishes Bahá’ís “*in accordance with the definite divine Holy Texts to obey and serve the throne of a just monarch (salṭanat-i `ádilih)*” (own translation)<sup>48</sup> and even be “*like slave-servants (mamlúk) to just kings (mulúk-i `ádil) and well-behaving subjects to liberal rulers (amír-i bádhil).*” (own translation)<sup>49</sup>

The fact that only just rulers may be obeyed is the red thread that is also confirmed in Abdu’l-Bahá’s political treatise, *Risála-i Siyásiyyah*: “*At the center of the political order of affairs (ratq wa fatq) and pivot of this circle of divine gift are just monarchs, perfect trustees, wise ministers and brave commanders of the army.*” (own translation)<sup>50</sup>

And quoting Bahá’u’lláh He states: “*It is incumbent upon everyone to aid those daysprings of authority and sources of command who are adorned with the ornament of equity and justice.*”<sup>51</sup>

It is evident from what has been said that the principle of obedience to the government is restricted in Bahá’í Writings to such kings and rulers who abide by justice and equity and does not include unjust and tyrannical rulers. In other words, obedience to someone like Jean Bedél Bokassa who in 1977 had turned the republic of Central Africa into a monarchy and declared himself emperor, and who was well known as being not only an oppressive tyrant, but also a cannibal, would make no sense whatsoever. The idea of supporting just rulers, but repelling tyrants and oppressors is evident in the Scriptural Writings of Bahá’u’lláh. He admonishes the rulers of the world to “*stay...the hand of the oppressor*” and “*to rule with justice. safeguard the rights of the down-trodden, and punish the wrongdoers*” and exhorts:

<sup>46</sup> Makátíb III:388. The term *hukúmat-i mutanawwi`ah* (various governments) used in the book edition (Egypt 1921) reads in the electronic version of BRL *hukúmat-i matbú`ah*, i.e. “governments to which one belongs or follows”.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. e.g. Abdu’l-Hamíd Eshráq-Khávarí: *Payám-i Malakút*, Iranian Bahá’í Publishing Trust, (Tehran) 130 B.E., p.410;

<sup>48</sup> Makátíb III:504

<sup>49</sup> Makátíb III:237

<sup>50</sup> *Risála-i siásiyya-i Haḍrat-i Abdu’l-Bahá*, Tehran 1934 (BRL) p. 7

<sup>51</sup> *Risála-i siásiyya* 12; the words of Bahá’u’lláh quoted from: *Tablets* p.221; quoted also in Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, US Bahá’í Publishing Trust 1979 (BRL) p.239

“...lay not excessive burdens on your peoples. Do not rob them to rear palaces for yourselves.”<sup>52</sup>

Abdu'l-Bahá then comments on Koran 4:59, “*Obey God, and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority*”<sup>53</sup>, and states that “*the meaning of those of you who are in authority is in the first place the Imams...and in the second place the kings and rulers, i.e. such kings whose light of justice shineth and enlightens the horizons.*” (own translation)<sup>53</sup>

It is thus the just rulers and the just governments which must be obeyed, rulers accompanied by brave commanders “*eager and prepared to fight and beat off the evils of aggressors and intruders (muta’addiyán).*” (own translation)<sup>54</sup> It is the right of resistance against evil aggressors implemented in this and many other parts of Bahá’í Writings which is stressed here.

Abdu'l-Bahá therefore exhorts to obey just governments only, whereas aggressors and tyrants have to be repulsed. Thus He also observes that “*kind behavior towards a tyrant (zálim), traitor or thief is not permissible, since kindness would be a cause for [increased] sedition (tughyán) on his part, and not for his repentance.*” (own translation)<sup>55</sup>

And as to the prohibition of engagement in political activities, **exceptions** exist to this rule too. In a talk given in Boston on 23 July 1912 He declares:

*“The Bahá’ís must not engage in political movements which lead to sedition. They must interest themselves in movements which conduce to law and order. In Persia at the present time the Bahá’ís have no part in the revolutionary upheavals which have terminated in lawlessness and rebellion. Nevertheless, a Bahá’í may hold a political office and be interested in politics of the right type. Ministers, state officials and governor-generals in Persia are Bahá’ís, and there are many other Bahá’ís holding governmental positions; but nowhere throughout the world should the followers of Bahá’u’lláh be engaged in seditious movements. For example, if there should be an uprising here in America having for its purpose the establishment of a despotic government, the Bahá’ís should not be connected with it.”*<sup>56</sup>

## 6. The Balkan Wars and the Italian Invasion of Libya

The decline and breakdown of the Ottoman Empire started to take shape after the great military successes of Muhammad Ali Pasha who had succeeded to bring Egypt out of the direct fold of the Ottomans and enabled him to establish his own dynasty which reigned in Egypt until 1952. The Greeks started their struggle for national independence in that period, Moldavia and Walachia were united into the autonomous principality of Romania in 1861, and the Turks had to evacuate their fortresses in Serbia in 1867. Pan-Slavism, supported by Russia and its agents in the region, had become the prevailing ideology in the Balkans during the sojourn of Bahá’u’lláh in Adrianople (1863-68). A serious insurrection broke out in

<sup>52</sup> The Proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh to the Kings and Leaders of the World, Bahá’í World Center, Haifa 1972, pp. 10, 11, 12

<sup>53</sup> Risála-i siyásiyya 14

<sup>54</sup> Risála-i siyásiyya 18

<sup>55</sup> Makátib III:211

<sup>56</sup> Promulgation 238

Herzegovina in 1875, followed by an uprising in Bulgaria in 1876 and a declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire by Serbia and Montenegro. Russian armies crossed the Ottoman frontiers and occupied Sofia and Adrianople, fulfilling Bahá'u'lláh's prophecy that *“the day is approaching when the Land of Mystery [Adrianople], and what is beside it shall be changed, and shall pass out of the hands of the king, and commotions shall appear, and the voice of lamentation shall be raised, and the evidences of mischief shall be revealed on all sides...”*<sup>57</sup>

The Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878 hopelessly dismembered the remnants of Ottoman territories in Europe. British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli intervened to prevent Russian control of the Balkans and the Straits of the Dardanelles, and at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which divided up the world among the European Powers, he deprived Russia of the fruits of her victory.

The term Balkan Wars refers to the two wars that took place in Southeastern Europe in 1912 and 1913. The first war broke out on 8 October 1912 when Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia constituting the Balkan League and having large parts of their ethnic populations under Ottoman sovereignty, attacked the Ottoman Empire, terminating its five centuries of rule in the Balkans in a seven-month campaign resulting in the Treaty of London. The deportation of people according to their “ethnic” backgrounds was stipulated in this treaty for the first time in history and was soon to lead to unprecedented atrocities and new forms of racism and racial prejudice committed later in Europe, especially by the Nazis. Unprecedented atrocities were committed by all parties involved and hundreds of thousands of Muslims, mostly Greeks, Bulgarians and Slavs now designated as “Turks”, were deported eventually to the Asiatic parts of Turkey, putting an end to Ottoman rule in Southeastern Europe.

The Second Balkan War broke out on 16 June 1913 when Bulgaria, dissatisfied with its gains, attacked its former allies, Serbia and Greece. Their armies repulsed the Bulgarian offensive and then attacked penetrating into Bulgaria, while Romania and the Ottomans used the favorable time to intervene against Bulgaria to make territorial gains. In the resulting Treaty of Constantinople 1913 an exchange of population on ethnical lines was “legalized”.<sup>58</sup>

The first allusion to the Balkan Wars is in a speech given by Abdu'l-Bahá on 7 October 1912 in Oakland, California, on the eve of the first day of the war (8 October 1912) – a striking proof of the fact that Abdu'l-Bahá, unlike common practice nowadays, often used to take His stand on current events in amazing topicality. In this speech He observes:

*“When we review history from the beginning of human existence to the present age in which we live, it is evident all war and conflict, bloodshed and battle, every form of sedition has been due to some form of prejudice—whether religious, racial or national—to partisan bias and selfish prejudice of some sort. Even today we witness an upheaval in the Balkans, a war of religious prejudice. Some years ago when I was living in Rumelia, war broke out among the religious peoples. There was no attitude of justice or equity whatever amongst them. They pillaged the properties of each other, burning each others' homes and houses, slaughtering men, women and children, imagining that such warfare and bloodshed was the means of drawing near to God. This clearly proved that prejudice is a destroyer of the foundations of the*

<sup>57</sup> Bahá'u'lláh: Súriy-i-Ra'ís, in: The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, Bahá'í World Center, Haifa 2002 (BRL) p. 143

<sup>58</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw: History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, 2 vols., vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge etc. 1977, pp. 292-298; regarding the Balkan Wars see Fikret Adanir: The Ottomans and the Balkans. A Discussion of Historiography, Brill, Leiden 2002.



*world of humanity, whereas religion was meant to be the cause of fellowship and agreement*”<sup>59</sup>

For Abdu’l-Bahá, what was happening in the Balkans during His travels in America, with all the bloodshed and atrocities, was a matter of great and painful sorrows. This is evident from the numerous references in His speeches:

*“Consider what is happening in the Balkans. Human blood is being shed, properties are destroyed, possessions pillaged, cities and villages devastated. A world-enkindling fire is astir in the Balkans. God has created men to love each other; but instead, they kill each other with cruelty and bloodshed. God has created them that they may cooperate and mingle in accord; but instead, they ravage, plunder and destroy in the carnage of battle. God has created them to be the cause of mutual felicity and peace; but instead, discord, lamentation and anguish rise from the hearts of the innocent and afflicted.”*<sup>60</sup> On another instance He laments: *“How savage and fearful the ferocity of man against his fellowman! Consider what is taking place now in the Balkans, what blood is being shed. Even the wild beasts and ferocious animals do not commit such acts. The most ferocious wolf kills but one sheep a day, and even that for his food. But now in the Balkans one man destroys ten fellow beings. The commanders of armies glory in having killed ten thousand men, not for food, nay, rather, for military control, territorial greed, fame and possession of the dust of the earth. They kill for national aggrandizement, notwithstanding this terrestrial globe is but a dark world of grossest matter. It is a world of sorrow and grief, a world of disappointment and unhappiness, a world of death.”*<sup>61</sup>

But besides His deep grief regarding the calamities of the war Abdu’l-Bahá laments the loss of sovereignty in the East. In a speech delivered on 7 November 1912 in Washington, D.C., not included in the Persian compilation, He exclaims: *“Consider events in the Balkans today where a great conflagration of war is furiously raging and so much blood is being shed. Virtually the whole world of humanity is mourning and lamenting because of the revival of these calamitous conditions. Governments are in the process of change and transformation. The sovereignty of oriental nations is tottering; outcomes are wrapped in the greatest uncertainty.”*<sup>62</sup> With His far reaching insight, Abdu’l-Bahá was predicting here the major happenings to come: The downfall of the Austrian, German and Ottoman Empires, and probably also the first allusion to the October Revolution. But it is also the penetration of the region by the Great Powers, leading to the loss and “tottering of sovereignty” of the oriental nations which Abdu’l-Bahá is lamenting here. The connotation of this speech to His letter to Tolstoy discussed above is evident.

The outbreak of the Great War found the Ottoman Empire exhausted by the Balkan Wars and the war with Italy (1911-12), which resulted in the loss of Tripolitania and the Dodecanese. The Italians, in accordance with the “ideology of the four coasts” aimed at the restoration of what they understood to be “their rights” to the territories of the ancient Roman Empire. After defeating the Ottoman army they confiscated on large scale the lands of the Arab peasants on

<sup>59</sup> Promulgation 343

<sup>60</sup> Promulgation 469

<sup>61</sup> Promulgation 396

<sup>62</sup> Promulgation 397f. On many other occasions too, He predicted the calamities still to come: *“The ills from which the world now suffers,”* wrote ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in January, 1920, *“will multiply; the gloom which envelops it will deepen. The Balkans will remain discontented. Its restlessness will increase. The vanquished Powers will continue to agitate. They will resort to every measure that may rekindle the flame of war”*, quoted in Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh (BRL)* p. 30

which Italian settlements were established and large numbers of Italian settlers were brought in for the cultivation of cash products. They met stiff resistance by the people and the tribesmen, who succeeded in driving them back from the Fazzan, to where Abdu'l-Bahá was to be exiled by the Ottoman authorities in 1905<sup>63</sup>, to the coastal regions of the Mediterranean. Resistance continued unabated during the Twenties under the leadership of the Libyan national hero Umar al-Mukhtár who was hanged in 1931 in one of the first concentration camps ever to be erected by the Fascists.<sup>64</sup> The invasion of Libya cost one million lives.<sup>65</sup> The Battle of Benghazi was a preliminary to the fascist invasion of Ethiopia and Italy's ambitions to establish its own colonial empire. Like in the other parts of the Maghreb, where French settlers had expelled the Arab peasants from their lands and established French settlements on the confiscated lands, and like all other instances in the course of history, colonialism has been always faced by resistance – in North Africa generally declared as Jihad – until the final breakdown of colonial rule and the achievement of national liberation.

Abdu'l-Bahá was affected personally by the Italian-Turkish war. When He arrived from Alexandria in Naples in the spring of 1912 to embark on the S.S. Cedric for America, He and His entourage were taken for Turks. It was probably for this reason that Shoghi Effendi and two other companions were forced to disembark and return to Egypt.<sup>66</sup>

The Italian invasion of Libya and the barbarian methods employed for the subjugation of its Arab people was a matter of great sorrow to Abdu'l-Bahá. In one of his Paris talks on 21 October 1911, not included in the Persian compilations, He said:

*“I hope you are all happy and well. I am not happy, but very sad. The news of the Battle of Benghazi grieves my heart. I wonder at the human savagery that still exists in the world! How is it possible for men to fight from morning until evening, killing each other, shedding the blood of their fellow-men: And for what object? To gain possession of a part of the earth! Even the animals, when they fight, have an immediate and more reasonable cause for their attacks! How terrible it is that men, who are of the higher kingdom, can descend to slaying and bringing misery to their fellow-beings, for the possession of a tract of land!*

*The highest of created beings fighting to obtain the lowest form of matter, earth! Land belongs not to one people, but to all people. This earth is not man's home, but his tomb. It is for their tombs these men are fighting. There is nothing so horrible in this world as the tomb, the abode of the decaying bodies of men.*

*However great the conqueror, however many countries he may reduce to slavery, he is unable to retain any part of these devastated lands but one tiny portion—his tomb! If more land is required for the improvement of the condition of the people, for the spread of civilization (for the substitution of just laws for brutal customs) — surely it would be possible to acquire peaceably the necessary extension of territory.*

*But war is made for the satisfaction of men's ambition; for the sake of worldly gain to the few, terrible misery is brought to numberless homes, breaking the hearts of hundreds of men and women!*

---

<sup>63</sup> Balyuzi 118f

<sup>64</sup> Ulrich Haarmann (ed.): Geschichte der Arabischen Welt, C.H.Beck, München 1991, pp. 563f. American actor Anthony Quinn played the role of Omar al-Mukhtar in the Hollywood classical film *Lion of the Desert*.

<sup>65</sup> Reinhard Schulze: Geschichte der Islamischen Welt im 20. Jahrhundert, C.H.Beck, München 1994, p. 143

<sup>66</sup> Balyuzi 171f.

*How many widows mourn their husbands, how many stories of savage cruelty do we hear! How many little orphaned children are crying for their dead fathers, how many women are weeping for their slain sons!*

*There is nothing so heart-breaking and terrible as an outburst of human savagery!*<sup>67</sup>

Abdu'l-Bahá believes Italy has turned into a barbarous nation because of its brutalities: “Consider the sad picture of Italy carrying war into Tripoli. If you should announce that Italy was a barbarous nation and not Christian, this would be vehemently denied. But would Christ sanction what they are doing in Tripoli?”<sup>68</sup> He felt it disturbing that a train accident which had caused 20 casualties in France was going to be debated in the French parliament, whereas thousands killed in Libya would go unnoticed. On 24 November 1911 he stated in one of His Paris Talks, not included in His Persian compilations:

*“I have just been told that there has been a terrible accident in this country. A train has fallen into the river and at least twenty people have been killed. This is going to be a matter for discussion in the French Parliament today, and the Director of the State Railway will be called upon to speak. He will be cross-examined as to the condition of the railroad and as to what caused the accident, and there will be a heated argument. I am filled with wonder and surprise to notice what interest and excitement has been aroused throughout the whole country on account of the death of twenty people, while they remain cold and indifferent to the fact that thousands of Italians, Turks, and Arabs are killed in Tripoli! The horror of this wholesale slaughter has not disturbed the Government at all! Yet these unfortunate people are human beings too.*

*Why is there so much interest and eager sympathy shown towards these twenty individuals, while for five thousand persons there is none? They are all men, they all belong to the family of mankind, but they are of other lands and races. It is no concern of the disinterested countries if these men are cut to pieces, this wholesale slaughter does not affect them! How unjust, how cruel is this, how utterly devoid of any good and true feeling! The people of these other lands have children and wives, mothers, daughters, and little sons! In these countries today there is hardly a house free from the sound of bitter weeping, scarcely can one find a home untouched by the cruel hand of war.”*<sup>69</sup>

To Abdu'l-Bahá the reason why the Italians have left their vast country “in order to persecute the poor Arabs...is nothing else than avarice and greediness”<sup>70</sup> To Him the occupation of Libya constituted “an **illegal assault** Italy’s” (*hujúm-i ghair-i mashrú’-i itáli*),<sup>71</sup> a significant remark which has been omitted in the English translation of *Promulgation*, and He says this openly, and in regard not to a remote incident of ancient history, but to an invasion taking place at that very moment.

*“Consider what is happening in Tripoli: how the poor are being killed [because of the illegal assault Italy’s] and the blood of the helpless is being shed upon both sides; children, made fatherless; fathers, lamenting the death of their sons; mothers,*

<sup>67</sup> Paris Talks (BRL) 9f

<sup>68</sup> Promulgation p. 6

<sup>69</sup> Paris Talks 114f

<sup>70</sup> Majmú`a-i Khitábát I:193f.

<sup>71</sup> Majmu`a-i Khitábat II:64 (367)

*bewailing the loss of dear ones. And what is the benefit after all? Nothing conceivable...For a wolf will carry away and devour one sheep at a time, whereas an ambitious tyrant may cause the death of one hundred thousand men in a battle and glory in his military prowess, saying, "I am commander in chief; I have won this mighty victory." Consider the ignorance and inconsistency of the human race. If a man kills another, no matter what the cause may be, he is pronounced a murderer, imprisoned or executed; but the brutal oppressor who has **slain one hundred thousand** is idolized as a hero, conqueror or military genius. A man steals a small sum of money; he is called a thief and sent to the penitentiary; but the military leader who invades and pillages a whole kingdom is acclaimed heroic and a mighty man of valor. How base and ignorant is man!*<sup>72</sup>

On another occasion He exclaims: "*Observe what is taking place in Tripoli: men cutting each other into pieces, bombardment from the sea, attacks from the land and the hail of dynamite from the very heaven itself.*"<sup>73</sup> Men conquering other territories in our times are considered by Him to be nothing less than "tyrants" and "murderers", and even worse than wolves.

It is evident that beyond the condemnation of acts of war in general terms, addressed here are the military leaders who invade, pillage and steal, and that it is Italian colonialism which is condemned in these passages. *N.b.*: Nobody at that time was, or even still today, may have been aware of the extremely high cost of one million lives that the Italian occupation of Libya had caused, when Abdu'l-Bahá was speaking of "one hundred thousand" people slain in the war for Tripoli. Another million lost their lives when Algerians fought the French 1957-62 for the liberation and independence of their country.

## 7. The Great Powers and the Question of Arab Unity

Since the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha in the first half of the nineteenth century and the invasion of Syria (1831-1840) by his son Ibrahim Pasha, the idea of the unity of the Arabic speaking countries under Ottoman rule, especially amongst the peoples of Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, had started taking shape. The concentrated military intervention by the Powers in 1840 brought the period of radical reforms in Egypt to an abrupt end. Nevertheless, the vision of Arab unity flourished in the second half of the century, mainly in Egypt which was out of the direct hold of the Ottomans, and initiated to a great deal by Syrian Christian Arabs who found best preconditions in the liberal atmosphere existing in Egypt in those days. The spread of newspapers, modern academies and education promoted the process of cultural Arab renaissance, *Nahda*, in the second part of the century. The Arab aspirations, mainly for cultural autonomy during this period, soon gained more of a political character. Secret societies, similar to the *Anjumans* in Iran calling for constitutionalism, emerged in growing numbers and now demanded decentralization, i.e. political autonomy in the general framework of the Ottoman Empire. The first calls for independence came from the Christian and Muslim members of the Arab National Conference, organized by the secret Committees and held in Paris in 1913 mainly by Syrian Arab students and intellectuals. The Ottomans, trying to stop the disintegration of their empire, resorted to more and more repressive measures and violence, which fomented still greater nationalist protests and anti-Ottoman feelings among the Arabs. Nationalist tensions rose high especially after the revolution of the Young Turks in 1909, in which Sultan Abd al-Hamid was deposed, and after their *coup* in January 1913 which finally established a one-party dictatorship under the triumvirate of

<sup>72</sup> Promulgation 119

<sup>73</sup> Promulgation 84

Enver, Tal'at and Jamal Pashas. Jamal, nicknamed "the Butcher", *al-Jazzár*, was not only an enemy of Abdu'l-Bahá, but also a fierce suppressor of the nationalists, whose leaders were hanged by the dozen in the main squares of Beirut and Damascus on 6 May 1916. The Arabs had a very liberal view of Arab nationalism, in which ethnicity and religious affiliation has no relevance. According to Ahmad Tabbara, one of the nationalist leaders later hanged by Jamal Pasha, "everyone who speaks Arabic, regardless of whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim" is regarded as an Arab.<sup>74</sup>

The first years of the World War were catastrophic for the allies. The Australian and New Zealand forces which landed on the beaches of the Gallipoli peninsula on the Dardanelles on 25 April 1915 were taken by surprise, and instead of a quick march to Constantinople, were, in spite of their overwhelming numerical superiority, driven back by the Turks from higher grounds onto a narrow strip of the beach. Gallipoli was to become a drawn-out replay of the trench war in the West. The Turkish army, consisting of large Arab divisions, was still capable of putting up strong resistance.<sup>75</sup> Another British force which had started to march from the Shatt al-Arab towards Baghdad in the same month lost half of its members and was besieged at Kut al-Amara on the Tigris. After 146 days and although fresh reinforcements had been sent to their rescue, the British suffered twenty-three thousand casualties, surrendered unconditionally and were carried into captivity. They perished along the way.<sup>76</sup> Engaged in a war on three fronts, the Ottomans defeated Britain and France in the west, crushed the British armies in the east and held off the Russians in the north.

It was during this period that British intelligence at the Arab Bureau in Cairo gathered information that an Arab revolt was being organized in the Hejaz by the Arab nationalist movement under the auspices of Sharif Hussein of Mecca. In a series of letters exchanged in 1915-1916 between the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Henry McMahon, and Sharif Hussein, the latter was given guarantees on behalf of the British government regarding the independence of the Arabs. The so-called *Hussein-McMahon-Correspondence* gave impetus to the military operations that were now carried out against the Turks under the command of Prince Feisal, one of the four sons of Hussein, and with logistical assistance by British non-commissioned officers such as T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). On 6 July 1917, a short time after the begin of the revolt, the Turkish garrison in Aqaba was overwhelmed. The British thus gained decisive strategic access to Palestine through this Red Sea port. On 1 October the victorious Arab army marched into Damascus. Feisal, who had been in touch with Abdu'l-Bahá during this period and had invited Him to his enthronization, was soon proclaimed king of Greater Syria.

The guerilla warfare by the Arabs was detrimental to the victory of the allies in the East. The commander of the British forces, General Edmund Allenby, with T.E. Lawrence in his entourage, marched on 11 December into Jerusalem. "We are back again, Saladdin", he had declared earlier in Damascus at the tomb of the warrior-hero who had liberated Jerusalem in

<sup>74</sup> Bassam Tibi: *Nationalismus in der Dritten Welt am arabischen Beispiel*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt am Main 1971, p.98. On Abdu'l-Bahá's views on the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), see Necati Alkan: *The Young Turks and the Baha'is in Palestine*, *ibid.* See also on this and similar matters the polemical exchange between Abdu'l-Bahá and Muhammad Abduh, Oliver Paul Scharbrodt: *Reconciling Religious Dissidence in the Baha'i Faith and in the Salafiyya: A comparative Study of `Abdul-Baha `Abbas (1844-1921) and Muhammad `Abduh (1849-1905)*. A dissertation submitted to the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies.

<sup>75</sup> David Fromkin: *A Peace To End All Peace. Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922*, Penguin Books, London 1991, pp. 157f

<sup>76</sup> Fromkin 201 ff.

1187 from the Crusaders. Both Allenby and Lawrence had, on different occasions, been in the presence of Abdu'l- Bahá.

The guarantees in regard to Arab independence given by McMahon were not worth the ink they were written with. In a secret British-French-Russian agreement, the *Sykes-Picot-Agreement*, concluded in April and May 1916, at the same time the Arabs were starting their Great Revolt, the same territories guaranteed to them by the British government were divided between the Powers. On 2 November 1917, even before British occupation of the Holy Land, British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour declared in a letter addressed to Lord Rothschild, that the British government “view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious status of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”<sup>77</sup>

At that time nobody ever asked, what right did the British government have to bestow one country to this party and another country to that? Who gave and still gives the Great Powers the legal right to split and divide the world and distribute its parts? And finally, how come Jewish rights are designated here “national” and those of the Arab majority merely “civil and religious”? The process of disintegrating the Middle East by the Great Powers has taken new shape after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the so called “Arab Spring” in 2011.

The fragmentation of the Middle East with the Sykes-Picot-Agreement in 1916 into a number of weak and subordinated states beside a Jewish state established in 1948 on Arab lands are the cornerstones of a conflict which is driving the world to the brink of a new global catastrophe and which is in dire need of a just and permanent solution satisfying the needs and aspirations of all parties involved.

## 8. The Return of the Jews to Palestine

The notion of a Jewish state evolved during the nineteenth century and in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which generated the idea of nation states and nationhood in the modern sense.<sup>78</sup> The first plans came from non-Jewish sources. Napoleon Bonaparte was probably the first to suggest the settlement of European Jews in the Suez region to safeguard a canal project he envisaged.<sup>79</sup> Lord Palmerstone, British Foreign Secretary from 1830-1841, seeking to halt French advances in the East planned the establishment of a British-backed Jewish client-state in Palestine to stop their advance and block Muhammad Ali's progress.<sup>80</sup> Plans of this kind set up by the Powers for safeguarding their own interests were quite numerous. When the Germans were constructing the Baghdad Railway in the last part of the century, plans were made to settle Jews in Asia Minor alongside the rails<sup>81</sup> or bestow an Ottoman Pashaliq upon them. American plans were made for the settlement of Jews in Arkansas or Oregon.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Fromkin 297

<sup>78</sup> No demands by Jews for a Jewish state were ever raised in the course of history, even during periods of great distress and agony.

<sup>79</sup> Walter Laqueur: *Der Weg zum Staat Israel. Geschichte des Zionismus*, Europaverlag, Wien 1972, p.59.

<sup>80</sup> Fromkin 269

<sup>81</sup> Friedrich H. Kochwasser: “*Das Deutsche Reich und der Bau der Bagdad-Bahn*“, in: Friedrich H. Kochwasser und Hans R. Roemer (Hrsg.): *Araber und Deutsche. Begegnungen in einem Jahrtausend*, Tübingen und Basel 1974, pp.294-349, here p.311

<sup>82</sup> Laqueur 61,86,91

Jews, especially in Central and Western Europe, who had suffered so much in their history because of religious prejudice, had attained in the aftermath of the French Revolution new and unprecedented liberties. A period of enlightenment and emancipation, the *Haskala*, led to a process of assimilation. Jews felt now that they were citizens of their respective countries, only of a different faith. They felt they were Germans, French, Italians or British citizens of Jewish faith. When Jewish authors like Hirsch Kalischer, Moses Hess or Nathan Birnbaum started to propagate the idea of a Jewish state in the second part of the century, this found no resonance among Jews. The liberal minded thought it would endanger their assimilation process, Orthodox Jews refused, since it was in contradiction to their belief that only when the Messiah came could such a state be founded. Especially the Arab Jews in Palestine were vehement opponents of the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>83</sup>

A turning point was the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, a new and modern ideology based on a racial and biological perception and hence definition of the world. The Dreyfus affair in Paris in 1894, in which a French Jewish captain had been falsely accused of spying for Germany, led to an outburst of anti-Semitic feelings among the French. It sent shock waves throughout Europe giving a premonition of what was soon going to be still worse. Theodore Herzl, a Jewish Austrian journalist who had been a vehement supporter of assimilation, wrote now his famous book, *The Jewish State*, in 1896, in which the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine or Argentina was proposed. A Jewish company designated *Jewish Eastern Company* like the East India Company which had initiated the colonization of India, was taken as a model.<sup>84</sup> In the following year the World Zionist Organization was constituted in Basle. The Chief Rabbi of Munich, where the congress was initially supposed to convene, had denied the Zionists permission to do so in his city. He, like the majority of the Jews in Europe, was opposed to the idea of a Jewish state and was an opponent of Zionism.<sup>85</sup> The *Jewish Colonial Trust* was founded to raise funds for the “colonial project”, as this was the official term used in the Zionist writings, not only during the early years of the movement, and organized Jewish emigration to Palestine started. Eastern European Jews had already started to immigrate into Palestine after the first anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia in 1881.

Throughout history Jews, unlike their situation in Europe, lived in peace in the lands under the rule of Islam. They were not considered equals and sometimes segregation and religious prejudice caused suffering. But they, like all other religious minorities, enjoyed freedom of religion as well as communal and civil autonomy. Nobody tried to convert them by force. Most of all they enjoyed the right to live their own lives. Pogroms and persecutions such as those which took place in the West were unknown. It was to these countries to where Jews usually took refuge, not only after the fall of Granada in 1492. Jewish communities suffering from persecution in the West had received on many occasions explicit invitations from Ottoman Sultans to come and settle far from persecution in the Empire. They came and founded flourishing communities in Sarajevo, in Thessaloniki, Izmir and in Constantinople. Jews lived over centuries in peace in Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad, in North Africa and in Iran. They had strong social ties with their non-Jewish neighbors. It may be good to remember that it was the Arabs who allowed Jews to live in Jerusalem after the Islamic Conquest. Under Byzantine rule they were denied this right.<sup>86</sup>

In Palestine too, like in most counties of the *Dár al-Islam*, Jews were never considered a *problem*. There was no such thing as a “Jewish Problem” that needed to be discussed, as was

---

<sup>83</sup> Laqueur 72,93,113

<sup>84</sup> Laqueur 109, 139

<sup>85</sup> Laqueur 120

<sup>86</sup> Karen Armstrong: Jerusalem, die heilige Stadt, Orbis Verlag, München 1999, pp. 335ff

the case in Europe and as the term which also appears in the subtitle of Herzl's book implies. No one considered it a problem that Jerusalem in the second part of the nineteenth century had a Jewish majority. Jews always used to come to Jerusalem - as pilgrims, to settle there, or just to die and be buried there. But the Jewish immigration after 1881, and more especially after the establishment of the World Zionist Organization in 1897, was of a different, a political nature. The Jewish immigrants came now with the explicit aim to establish a state of their own and to the exclusion of the Arab inhabitants of the land. Like Europe, where the Zionist concept of a Jewish state had been rejected by the great majority of the Jewish communities, so too in Palestine. Palestinian Jews initially rejected the Zionist claims and refused co-operation with the "Western infidels".<sup>87</sup> Like in Europe Zionism remained a marginal movement within the Jewish communities. It is only after the *Machtergreifung* of the National Socialists in 1933 that a significant rise in Jewish immigration to Palestine can be registered.

With the establishment of the first settlements in northern Palestine, such as Pitha Tikva, in the Eighties of the nineteenth century, the first Arab peasants living and cultivating the land were expelled. Due to the small numbers of Jewish immigrants, protest remained local. The expulsion of the Palestinian peasants was a first taste of what later became a cornerstone of the Jewish colonization process: The two principles of "Jewish land" and "Jewish labor" (*avoda ivrit*), declared as official policy by the Zionist Organization in Palestine in the Twenties of the last century, meant expulsion of Arab Palestinians both from Jewish land-acquisitions and from Jewish enterprises.<sup>88</sup> During the same period, when Nazi rogues were denying people their right to shop at Jewish shops in Germany, members of the newly founded Jewish labor union, *Histadrut*, were attacking Jewish ladies who wished to do their shopping in Palestinian shops in much a similar manner, destroying the tomatoes and eggs they had bought.<sup>89</sup> All of this was a preview to the "ethnic cleansing" of Palestine with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The official Israeli documents published and discussed by "the New Historians" in Israel reveal the dimensions of the massacres and atrocities committed against the Palestinians in those crucial years. Deir Yassin became a synonym for the massacres committed by the members of different Jewish organizations. Nearly 170 people perished when members of the Irgun went from house to house shooting the inhabitants. In Lydda (Lod) hundreds were driven into the mosque and shot at short range, all civilians and mostly elderly people. Haifa came under heavy bombardment in April 1948, still during the British mandate. The military orders of the Jewish commanding officer were very clear: "Kill any Arab you encounter, torch all inflammable objects and force doors open with explosives."<sup>90</sup> The panic-stricken population which had gathered at the market-place at the port to flee by boats came under heavy shelling. "Men stepped on their friends and women on their own children. The boats in the port were soon filled with living cargo... Many turned over and sank with all their passengers."<sup>91</sup> The military operation called "Cleansing the Leaven" (*bi`ur hametz*) achieved its objectives. The term denotes a part of the religious ceremony of Sukkot, when the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt led by Moses is celebrated and the homes are cleansed from all crusts of leavened bread. Now it was the Palestinians who were to be cleansed out of their own homes. Abuse of this and similar religious terms like *Tihur*, which designates purity, was commonplace.<sup>92</sup> The majority of the Palestinian population of Haifa was displaced and deported from the city. From 71200 Arab

<sup>87</sup> Laqueur 72,93,128.

<sup>88</sup> John Bunzl: Israel und die Palästinenser. Die Entwicklung eines Gegensatzes, Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, Wien 1982. 32ff., 36ff.

<sup>89</sup> Bunzl 33

<sup>90</sup> Ilan Pappé: The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, Oneworld Publications, Oxford 2006, pp. 92-96, here p. 95

<sup>91</sup> Pappé 96

<sup>92</sup> Pappé 94,13



residents of Haifa only 2900 remained. In Akka the drinking water had been poisoned. Akka with 96% Palestinian and 4% Jewish population, together with the majority of the other Palestinian territories passed into Israeli hands. Out of 15000 Arab residents of Akka only 3500 had remained. All their lands were confiscated by the Jews.<sup>93</sup> Nearly 670 Palestinian cities, towns and villages were fully destroyed and erased from the surface of the earth. Parks and forests were planted to wipe out their remains. The Israeli historian Ilan Pappé calls this an “urbicide of Palestine”.<sup>94</sup> The Palestinian refugee problem is today one of the most crucial issues in international politics.

The Holy Books of Judaism, Christianity and Islam all refer to the return of the Jews to Palestine in the “End of Times”. The idea of restoring the Jews to Zion won great significance in the nineteenth century, especially among fundamentalist Christian movements, who thought that with their active aid in bringing Jews to Palestine, they would hasten the Second Return of Christ. Such evangelical movements in Britain also had strong supporters among the leading politicians of that period, who made use of such sentiments to the benefit of their colonial plans. Earl of Shaftesbury inspired such an evangelical movement in the first half of the nineteenth century. He also inspired Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerstone, who thought that with this, he would foil the advance of the French and of Muhammad Ali by placing a British-backed Jewish homeland on their way, which would block their advance. He also thought that such a British client in the Middle East would always represent an excuse to interfere in Ottoman affairs.<sup>95</sup>

Bahá’ís too believe that the return of the Jews to Palestine is part of the Divine Plan concerning the New Era. On many occasions beyond the scope of our study, this has been stressed both by Bahá’u’lláh and Abdu’l-Bahá. In *Some Answered Questions* Abdu’l-Bahá maintains:

*“But in this cycle of the Lord of Hosts all the nations and peoples will enter under the shadow of this Flag. In the same way, Israel, scattered all over the world, was not reassembled in the Holy Land in the Christian cycle; but in the beginning of the cycle of Bahá’u’lláh this divine promise, as is clearly stated in all the Books of the Prophets, has begun to be manifest. You can see that from all the parts of the world tribes of Jews are coming to the Holy Land; they live in villages and lands which they make their own, and day by day they are increasing to such an extent that all Palestine will become their home.”*<sup>96</sup>

A “home” is of course not necessarily a “state”, to which no allusions whatsoever are made in the Scriptural Bahá’í Writings, so far we gather. And a “home”, or a dwelling place, can by no means be an indication to expropriation of land, the killing and deportation of the people and the destruction of their homes, to which Bahá’í Writings can not possibly make any allusions. Besides, Abdu’l-Bahá spoke these words in 1904<sup>97</sup> during the Ottoman period, when Jewish immigration was still marginal and restricted to relatively small areas. Violent and militant methods of land confiscations were insignificant. With the British occupation of Palestine in 1917 the situation changed radically. Although the British were trying, at least superficially, to keep to their promises regarding “the civil and religious rights” of the Palestinians, the

<sup>93</sup> Bunzl 68

<sup>94</sup> Pappé 91

<sup>95</sup> Fromkin 268f.

<sup>96</sup> *Some Answered Questions* p.65f.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. footnote in the German edition, Abdu’l-Bahá: Beantwortete Fragen, Bahá’í Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 73

Jewish settlers were given a free hand to arm, train and drill their paramilitary forces. Especially after the October Revolution, when Leo Trotzki, the new Soviet Foreign Secretary, made the secret terms of the *Sykes-Picot-Agreement* public and announced the withdrawal of the USSR from the treaty, anti-British feelings were on the rise again all over the Arab world. In Palestine people felt that they were betrayed by the British and endangered by the increasing numbers of militant Jewish immigrants coming into Palestine with the intention of establishing an exclusively Jewish state. Protests were growing in the major cities of Palestine and demonstrations often caused bloodshed and casualties on both sides.

Abdu'l-Bahá, to whom all different kinds of people used to come for consultations and discussions on all sorts of matters, from spiritual and metaphysical matters to those on socialism, nationalism and patriotism, also used to be visited by Jews and Arabs, who wanted to know His views on the future of Palestine and on Arab independence.<sup>98</sup> Pilgrims, travelers and regular attendants used to keep notes on such meetings which are considered primary sources. Like all source material, such sources do not lack errors and must therefore undergo examination according to historical methods in order to establish their authenticity. One such method is to see whether an issue discussed there fits into the general historical context and, more especially, is, as in our case, in connotation with views discussed by Abdu'l-Bahá on other occasions. Even in cases where this is not so, the researcher may look for other means to verify, or falsify, those issues. In our case the latter procedure will prove unnecessary.

## 9. Abdu'l-Bahá's Views on Jewish Immigration

Whereas Abdu'l-Bahá had always been, in accordance to the prophecies of the Scriptures, very enthusiastic in regard to the Return of the Jews to the Holy Land, there are some significant references as to a change in His views in accordance to the more hostile and militant methods adopted by Jewish settlers with the beginnings of British rule in Palestine. Of special significance hereby are the diaries of Dr. Zia al-Baghdadi. He was the son of Muhammad Mustafa al-Baghdadi (1838-1910), an eminent early Arab Bahá'í from Baghdad and apostle of Bahá'u'lláh. Dr. Zia, as he was usually called, was born in 1884 in Beirut and died in 1937 in Atlanta. Both his first name and his nickname, *Mabsút* (Happy), were bestowed upon him by Bahá'u'lláh. During his childhood he used to visit Abdu'l-Bahá regularly in Haifa and after graduating in medicine at the American University of Beirut in 1909 he traveled to Chicago, where he became one of the outstanding Bahá'ís of the United States and editor of the *Star of the West*. He accompanied Abdu'l-Bahá during His journey in the US in 1912 and represented the Arab Bahá'ís when Abdu'l-Bahá laid the cornerstone of the temple in Chicago. In 1919 Dr. Zia traveled to Palestine and spent the period from 8 December to 28 August 1920 in the presence of Abdu'l-Bahá, was engaged in His medical treatment and of other members of His family, and had the privilege on many occasions of sleeping in Abdu'l-Bahá's own bedroom.<sup>99</sup> He was present at the ceremonies in the Garden of the Military Governor of Haifa, in which Abdu'l-Bahá was invested with the insignia of the Knighthood of the British Empire, and attended the daily meetings of Abdu'l-Bahá in which He discussed the political affairs of the Middle East and met distinguished political and military personalities.

<sup>98</sup> Mu'ayyad p. 120

<sup>99</sup> Kamran Ekbal: "Murúri bar alwáh-i hazrat-i Bahá'u'lláh khatáb ba Muhammad Mustafá Baghdádí" in: Safina-i Īrfán 4, Darmstadt 2001, pp.192-202; cf. also ibid.: "Bagdadi Family", in: Encyclopaedia Iranica, online edition, February 2014.

The diaries of Dr. Zia Baghdadi, written on a daily basis in Arabic and Persian in two volumes (258 and 239 pages respectively) under the title *al-Rihla al-Baghdádiyya* (The Baghdadian Journey), are of special significance for a better understanding of Abdu'l-Bahá's views on the political affairs of the Middle East. The statements of Abdu'l-Bahá are generally given as direct quotations. Many references are in regard to Jewish immigration. On different occasions Abdu'l-Bahá confirms that Jews will continue to come to the Holy Land in accordance to the prophecies of Ezekiel and other prophets.<sup>100</sup> Changes in Abdu'l-Bahá's views are mentioned, directly or indirectly. Under the title "The Coming of the Jews" (*àmadan-i yahúd*) Dr. Zia notes for example: "*He (Abdu'l-Bahá) declared: `Thanks to God we are at peace with all peoples of the world. We have no quarrels and no arguments with anybody. Whether Jews come to the Holy Land or not, this makes no difference. An ignorant person considers unimportant matters to be important, and important ones to be unimportant. What is bound to happen will happen. This breeze will have to blow and the whole world will not be able to stop it. The sun has to set, and it can not be that it does not do so. This cloud has to rain and then disappear.`*"<sup>101</sup> Maybe the notion that whether Jews should come to Palestine or not, this would "make no difference", may be taken to be an allusion to such a turning point in Abdu'l-Bahá's views, that would become more evident in His other statements.

Allusions to a turning point in Abdu'l-Bahá's views are contained in Dr. Zias report on anti-Jewish Arab demonstrations in Akka. He writes: "*On 10 March (1920) there were Arab demonstrations in Akka against the Jews. The Master declared: `The Jews here can not be trusted. Wise men understand what is meant herewith. The (Arab) inhabitants (of this country) should have taken precautionary measures against this problem from the beginning. When I was in Tiberias I saw (Jewish) soldiers training daily and doing military exercises. I told Mansur Pasha that this military training will have (sad) repercussions in future, but he said that this was not of any importance. But now Mansur Pasha is saying: `You know what we do not know.` The Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) has promised that the Jews will return to the Holy Land and this promise was given fifty years ago.`*"<sup>102</sup>

Several points in this significant passage need to be discussed. At first concerning the Easter demonstrations of 1920 mentioned there. By early 1920 British Naval Intelligence had reported growing frustration among the Palestinian peasants. "They allege that the Jewish colonists are subsidized from without and have been granted privileges by the Administration which were denied to others, and state that they cannot compete against such advantages, and would therefore be ultimately squeezed out of existence."<sup>103</sup> On 27 February 1920 a big Arab demonstration took place in Jerusalem, followed by another one on 8 March, amidst considerable excitement due to the recent proclamation of Faisal as King of Syria and Palestine. Stones were thrown and a few Jews were injured. Two Jewish settlements at Metulla and Tel Hai were attacked by armed Palestinians operating probably from Syria. A prominent Zionist officer, Captain Joseph Trumpeldor, who together with Vladimir Jabotinski are considered to be the founding fathers of the Haganah military forces, was killed in the raid together with six other Jews. Jabotinski split off later from the Zionist Organization and established the right-wing and fascist movement of Zionism-Revisionism. Both Jabotinski, who used to be called "Vladimir Hitler" by David Ben Gurion, and the Revisionists were

<sup>100</sup> Zia Baghdadi: *al-rihla al-baghdádiyya*, copy of manuscript in the private collection of Baghdadi and Ekbal families and kept at the Bahá'í Archives in Haifa, vol.

I:145,158; II:187

<sup>101</sup> Baghdadi II:187 (all quotations from Baghdadi are own translation).

<sup>102</sup> Baghdadi I:158

<sup>103</sup> Cf. A.W.Kayyali: *Palestine. A Modern History*, Croom Helm, London, n.d., p.74

openly partisans of the fascist movement in Italy which armed and trained their paramilitary forces. Jabotinski was referred to as the fascist leader of the Jews by Mussolini.<sup>104</sup> Several militant Zionist groups and organizations were openly partisans of Hitler and Mussolini during the period prior to the Second World War.<sup>105</sup>

The process of polarization had been accomplished by this time and anti-Zionist and anti-British sentiments ran hand in hand. Describing the explosive situation on the eve of Easter 1920, the British Palin Commission stated: “*The whole native population, Arab (i.e. Muslim) and Christian, was in a condition of active hostility at once to the Zionists and the British Administration, their sentiment influenced by a sense of their own wrongs (i.e. trusting the British promises regarding their independence), their fears for the future and the active propaganda of various anti-British and anti-Zionist elements working freely in their midst.*”<sup>106</sup>

The Easter week with its inevitable religious disorders coinciding with the Christian and Jewish feasts and the Muslim Nabi Musa Pilgrimage became a culminating point. Although the British authorities had prohibited demonstrations great numbers of Arabs arrived in Jerusalem, political speeches were given by Arab nationalist leaders and portraits of Faisal were displayed. Then at the Jaffa Gate an explosive device was thrown into the crowd. Outraged demonstrators started throwing stones. Jewish shops were looted and several Jews beaten. Armed Jews shot at the crowds and from 4 to 10 April total casualties reported amounted to 251, 9 of which were killed and the majority slightly wounded. The Jews sustained 5 killed and ca. 200 injured, mostly though attacks with knives, sticks and stones. The Arabs sustained 28 casualties, 4 of which were killed by firearms.

The British Court summoned to look into the causes of the riots pointed out that “Self-Defense” units set up by Vladimir Jabotinsky, who had served in the British army during the war without the knowledge or approval of the British Administration, were responsible for the shooting and that these units “*were openly drilling at the back of Lemel School and on Mount Scopus*”. It concluded that the British were now “*faced with a native population thoroughly exasperated by a sense of injustice and disappointed hopes, panic stricken as to their future and as to ninety per cent of their numbers in consequence bitterly hostile to the British Administration.*”<sup>107</sup> It is this “*sense of injustice*” that had taken hold of ninety per cent of the Palestinian population in that year, as mentioned in the Courts verdict, and which had thoroughly exasperated the native population which explains the change of mood of a person so sensitive to injustice like Abdu’l-Bahá.

The political tensions in Palestine during those crucial days are clearly reflected in Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements. The widespread frustration of the Palestinians because of what they felt to be a betrayal of the guarantees given to them by the British for their independence, and because of the growing warlike preparations of the paramilitary Zionist units that had also been witnessed by Abdu’l-Bahá, as well as the bloody anti-Zionist and anti-British protests spreading all over the country.

The aforementioned statement of Abdu’l-Bahá implies yet other points of great significance:

<sup>104</sup> Lenni Brenner: *Zionism in the Age of Dictators*. A reappraisal, Croom Helm, London and Canberra 1983, p.117

<sup>105</sup> Laqueur 381,383

<sup>106</sup> The Palin Commission Report, cf. Kayyali, p. 75

<sup>107</sup> Kayyali 77

1. Abdu'l-Bahá seems, like the Arab majority in the country which felt that it was betrayed by people it had always provided with shelter and support, to be disappointed by the militant and provocative manners of the Jewish colonists. He maintains that "*the Jews here can not be trusted*" and concludes that *wise men would understand* what He means.
2. What is implied by this statement is more than mere disappointment on the part of Abdu'l-Bahá. He deems it necessary that the Arab inhabitants should have taken "*precautionary measures*" against what had now turned, also in His eyes, to be a "*problem*".
3. When Abdu'l-Bahá witnessed Jewish paramilitary units drilling in Tiberias, He was not indifferent. He made a notification about this observation, n.b. not to the British colonial authorities, but to Mansur Pasha, apparently one of the influential local notables or *a'yan*, and He warned of the repercussions of the military preparations of the Zionists: "*This military training will have (sad) repercussions in future*". Many of the Arab notables, big landowners, rich merchants and members of the *bourgeoisie*, were in the best case indifferent to the emerging situation. They still relied on their British "friends" and believed that these would not allow the land be taken from them, as evident in the attitude of Mansur Pasha: "*He said that this was not of any importance*". In many cases such notables were even ready to sell their land for high prices paid by the Jewish Colonization Fund. It is obvious that Abdu'l-Bahá is very disappointed here about Mansur Pasha's indifference to His warnings.
4. In spite of this change of mood, Abdu'l-Bahá nevertheless keeps to the divine promises regarding the Return of the Jews. It is as if He is saying that they will return all right, but please, not in this manner!

The widespread Arab fears for the future and their rising frustrations in regard to the Jewish immigration are also documented by Dr. Zia Baghdadi. Under the subtitle "*Whom does the Holy Land belong to? The Future of the Jews*" he writes:

*"The Master observed: 'I paid the British Assistant-Governor a visit, because he was ill. There I found a group of [Palestinian] Christians. They were talking to him about the Jewish Question (al-mas'ala al-yahúdiyya), and that 'they [the Jews] wanted to rule in the Holy Land take commerce, industries and agriculture out of our hands, and that we here in Haifa number eight thousand Christians. There is also the same number of Muslims and Jews. They will force us to emigrate from here. Would that be all right that sixteen thousand of the inhabitants of this city should become beggars and displaced persons (fuqará' wa muhájirín) without shelter? Moreover: Jews in Britain, France, Germany etc. have taken the decision to emigrate from their countries and it is their intention to take our country out of our hands. Is that all right? It is obvious that this will lead to bloodshed and to great dangers. The assistant-governor then said: 'Be assured and ascertained that there is no danger whatsoever. Not at all! The Jews will not ever be able to take over the Holy Land because the Bahá'ís in America and Iran will prevent them from that! Do you not see the [great] numbers of pilgrims from America and Iran and from the whole world? Bahá'ís hold this Land sacred more than the Jews and more than all other nations because it is the Center of Bahá and of the great Báb, and the mausoleum of Bahá'u'lláh is in Akká and that of the Báb is on the Carmel. So how could they ever leave it to the Jews? For sure, they will come and buy all these lands. Therefore there is no reason [for you] to fear the Zionists'."*

Abdu'l-Bahá then exclaims that it was the folly of the Turkish and Persian governments that they sent Bahá'u'lláh from Persia to Baghdad and Adrianople and thence to Akká in order to destroy the foundations of His Cause, not knowing that they did Him thus a great favor: *“They gave Him the Holy Land and put Him therein, but they know not what they do. Jews will accept this Cause for sure. They will have no other choice.”* Then Abdu'l-Bahá narrates His well celebrated vision of the future of the Carmel illuminated in radiant lights with thousands of ships bringing kings and rulers of the world, carrying roses and flowers on top of their heads to the Shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bab, awestruck, with full reverence and in total submission with tears flowing down their eyes. To all of this Abdu'l-Bahá envisages furthermore *“hospitals for the sick, houses for aged persons as well as Houses of Worship (msháriq al-adhkár)”*<sup>108</sup>

The vision of Abdu'l-Bahá recorded here may be of special interest to Bahá'ís since it envisages the erection of more than one House of Worship at one and the same place, whereas sources usually speak of only one House of Worship which will have to be erected in later times. But the statement is also of special significance in regard to our topic. Abdu'l-Bahá's presentation is in complete harmony with the testimony of the Palin Commission and that of the British Court, quoted above, which are authentic records of the grievances and fears suffered by the Arab Palestinians. It gives evidence to the fact that Abdu'l-Bahá was very well aware of the despair of the Arab population, knew their fears of being driven out of their own country by the Jewish immigrants, and witnessed their well-to-do leaders, who, in spite of the pro-Jewish positions of the British, nevertheless relied on the assurances and appeasements given by the latter, no matter how ridiculous these were, maintaining even that Bahá'ís from America and Iran will prevent Jews from taking over the land!

After His investiture in Haifa, Jewish leaders came to congratulate Abdu'l-Bahá. He said to them:

*“Be assured, I have told the Muslims and the Christians [here] that an Arab proverb says: ‘Think of how to get out, before you get into someplace.’ Which means that if a wise man wants to enter someplace, he should better give thoughts as to how he will leave that place, because one might get into a place and then find out that it is now difficult to get out of there. I told them that you should be religious. In that case and according to the Torah and the holy books of Ezekiel, Isaiah and Daniel, the Jews shall surely return to the Holy Land. And in case you were worldly, even then the Jews are of higher education, more experienced, of greater wealth, commercial abilities and political experience than you, and they have a great power behind them, which aids them from Europe and America. So there is no use in resisting and you should therefore be thinking of other possibilities. They said, we could nevertheless shout and cry.”*<sup>109</sup>

A few days later, on 30 April 1920, He reminded those in His presence that Bahá'u'lláh had prayed fifty years earlier for the Jews and that He had asked God to end their misery and bestow might upon them and gather them in the Holy Land.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Baghdadi II:13f. The vision of Abdu'l-Bahá from Baghdadi's Diary is also quoted in: Mu'ayyad 80f. Similar parts of the vision related in Ahmad Sohrab's diary from 14 Feb. 1914 are quoted in: J.E. Esslemont: Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980 ed. (BRL)pp. 250f

<sup>109</sup> Baghdadi II:53

<sup>110</sup> Baghdadi II:55

But beyond this principal attitude toward what Abdu'l-Bahá considers to be the divine promises regarding the “Return of the Jews”, there are other significant episodes reported by Dr. Zia. He writes:

*“In regard to Jews, the Master proclaimed: ‘They will come to Palestine, but they will regret that (sayandamùn), since income is low in this country and their conditions are better in the West’. Then He started joking with Jamil Effendi al-Jarráh.*

*- The Master: ‘How were the demonstrations today, Jamil?’*

*- Jamil Effendi: ‘I was one of the orators today on behalf of the Arabs.’*

*- The Master: ‘And what did you say?’*

*- Jamil Effendi: ‘I said that the Holy Land is the fatherland of Christ and the Virgin Mary and that the Jews crucified Him... (unreadable)’*

*- The Master: ‘And what if one of them [i.e. the Jews] said that Christ was one of us and our relative and from amongst us, whereas you are a Muslim and a foreigner and have neither a family relationship to Him, nor racial ties, what would you then say?’*

*- Jamil Effendi: ‘I’ll say, you are His enemies and you crucified Him.’*

*- The Master: ‘And if he tells you, that this is a story which happened two thousand years ago whereas we are the children of today and do not have anything to do with what happened then, and that moreover differences occur among the members of a family, which is no business of an outsider, and that, in addition, we are no enemies of Christ now, what would you then say?’*

*Jamil Effendi was stunned and kept silent. The Master then related that: ‘Once a man in Iran brought up a case to court against My uncle and invited thence the judge to a meal of rice and meat. After that We heard the judge saying, if the person accused now invites me too to a meal of rice and meat, so I will speak my verdict to his benefit. Now you too, Jamil, if the Jews want to carry on a demonstration and you would like to be on their side, so hold a speech and tell them this verse from the Koran: “And We desired to show favor unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them examples and to make them the inheritors” (Q 28:5). “O Children of Israel! Remember My favor wherewith I favored you, and how I preferred you to (all) creatures” (Q 2:47), and say that this is a strong proof, which needs no elucidation. Do as the Arab proverb says: ‘Dress according to the customs of the country you live in, be part both of its blessings or its misery, and you shall [not?] play on two kettle-drums’.*<sup>111</sup>

In this episode related by Dr. Zia in his diary there are two issues of importance. Whereas Abdu'l-Bahá seems disappointed about the way the “Return of the Jews” was taking place and He now even maintains that Jews will come to Palestine, but “*they will regret that*”, He nevertheless discusses the traditional anti-Jewish prejudices common in Europe all through the centuries and mutating there into anti-Semitism, and which, due to the political tensions resulting from the Zionist penetration, had also started to gain ground in the Near and Middle East. In the dialogue with Jamil al-Jarráh, recorded here minutely by Dr. Zia, He refutes these arguments, proves their groundlessness and supports His views by verses from the Koran. Jews would have not been able to find a better attorney of defense for their case. He defends

<sup>111</sup> Baghdadi I:159f

the Jews against generalizing accusations of the traditional sort, but He remains critical as to the military preparations of the Jewish organizations and the methods adopted, expelling peasants from their land and destroying their homes. “*Jews here tend to be dirty and filthy*”, He exclaims on another occasion. “*Look at these houses and gardens, how they have been turned into ruins. Wherever you see houses and gardens evacuated, empty and in ruins like these, be sure that they are in Jewish hands. They rent them in splendid shape and turn them into ruins with all their filth.*”<sup>112</sup>

Another very significant instance is recorded under 3 July 1920 when Abdu’l-Bahá exclaimed: “*Jews do not consider the consequences of their behavior. They are now happy because of their return to the Holy Land, but if they would bother to ponder upon the future, they should no longer be arrogant and ostentatious. Their arrogance and ostentation is nothing else than a children’s playground. But prophets of God take the consequences of things [and to where they lead] into consideration. Sticks and stones are of no importance to them...*”<sup>113</sup>

The expectations of Abdu’l-Bahá in regard to Jewish immigration into Palestine as part of the Divine Plan of God, especially in regard to the segregation practiced by the Zionists against the Palestinians were all frustrated. In an interview given to Marion Weinstein from the *Globe and Commercial Advertiser*, New York, July 17, 1919 entitled “*Declares Zionists Must Work with Other Races*” and reprinted in *Star of the West* less than two months later Abdu’l-Bahá declares:

*“If the Zionists will mingle with the other races and live in unity with them, they will succeed. If not, **they will meet certain resistance**...The Zionists should make it clear that their principle is **to elevate all the people here and to develop the country for all its inhabitants**. This land must be developed, according to the promises of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zachariah. If they come in such a spirit they will not fail. **They must not work to separate the Jews from the other Palestinians**. Schools should be open to all nationalities here, business companies, etc. **The Turks went down because they attempted to rule over foreign races**...This is the path to universal peace here as elsewhere – unity.”*<sup>114</sup>

## 10. Plans for the Destruction of the Aqsa Mosque

Abdu’l-Bahá is very frank about what He has to say. He warns the Jews in very clear terms concerning matters that have now, ninety years after His statements, become reality. He admonishes them to ponder on their future and not to be disillusioned by their present superiority. “*Their arrogance and ostentation is nothing else than a children’s playground.*”

A very sensitive issue referred to in Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements is in regard to plans for the destruction of the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Radical and extremist fundamentalist Jewish organizations declare openly today their intention to destroy the third most holy place of Islam, also known as the Mosque of Omar, in order to rebuild the Temple of Solomon in its place. To what widespread turmoil and disasters this would inevitably lead is evident. Indications of such plans have existed ever since an Australian extremist Jew put the mosque

<sup>112</sup> Baghdadi II:99

<sup>113</sup> Baghdadi II:177

<sup>114</sup> Star of the West, vol. 10, No. 10, September 8, 1919, pp. 195 f. The author is very much indebted to Dr. Iskandar Hay, M.D., Toronto, who drew my attention to this quotation.



on fire shortly after the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967. Abdu'l-Bahá's information recorded by Dr. Zia Baghdadi may be the earliest reference to such plans and intentions. On 6 July Abdu'l-Bahá was talking about Jerusalem and the false locations of many of its holy sites, when He declared: *"The Jews want to take the Mosque of Omar, beneath which the Temple of Solomon was situated, and they want to rebuild the Temple on top of it."* Then, on the following day He exclaims: *"If Jews are capable of getting hold of a Muslim in some lonely place, they would beat him, and then start shouting 'aakh, amán, help, rescue, this Muslim is killing me'."*<sup>115</sup> Then Abdu'l-Bahá relates a story about a Jew with whom He was once acquainted: *"Mirza Ibrahim, a Jew, declared once that he had become Muslim. The Blessed Beauty asked him whether his conversion was based upon conviction. The man answered: 'In the bazaar I am a Muslim, on the way I regret that, and back home I am what I am.'"*<sup>116</sup>

The Aqsa Mosque referred to above in regard to the Jewish plans for its destruction is held both by Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá in high esteem. It is referred to in His summons to the Kings and Rulers of the World and included in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*: *"O Emperor of Austria! He Who is the Dayspring of God's Light dwelt in the prison of Akká at the time when thou didst set forth to visit the Aqsa Mosque... We, verily, made it a place whereunto the world should turn, that they might remember Me."*<sup>117</sup>

Mention hereto is also made in His Tablet to Queen Victoria: *"The Mosque of Aqsá vibrateth through the breezes of its Lord, the All-Glorious, whilst Bathá trembleth at the voice of God, the Exalted, the Most High. Whereupon every single stone of them celebrateth the praise of the Lord, through this Great Name."*<sup>118</sup>

The Aqsa is also praised in the *Súrat al-Haykal* as a "sanctuary" for the peoples of the whole world and observes that this distinction is due to His own Manifestations, i.e. the Prophets of Israel, Christ and Muhammad, who had foresaid His advent: *"Again, consider the Mosque of Aqsá and the other places which We have made sanctuaries unto the people in every land and region. The honour and distinction they enjoy is in no wise due to their own merit, but stemmeth from their relation to Our Manifestations, Whom We have appointed as the Daysprings of Our Revelation amidst mankind, if ye be of them that understand. In this there lieth a wisdom inscrutable to all save God."*<sup>119</sup>

Also Abdu'l-Bahá extols the Aqsa in one of His Arabic Tablets, calling it *"The Blessed Radiant Spot and the White Sacred Fold"*. In allusion to Q 17:1 and Q 53:8-9, 13-14 He maintains that God has blessed that spot to where He had carried Muhammad in the Night-journey (*laylat al'isrá'*): *"...situated therein the Aqsa Mosque, the neighborhood whereof God hath blessed and to where He hath carried the Muhammadean Beauty during the Night-journey so He may witness the great signs of His Lord, and His arrival there was His Ascension (rúj) to the Realms of High and to the Abhá Kingdom, whence He came into the Presence of His Lord... all of that through His arrival in this Blessed Radiant Spot and White Sacred Fold"* (own translation)<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Baghdadi II:182f.

<sup>116</sup> Baghdadi II:184

<sup>117</sup> Bahá'u'lláh: The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 1993, #85

<sup>118</sup> Summons §171, p.89; Epistle p.60;/ *Alwáh hadrat Bahá'u'lláh ilá al-mulúk wa al-ru'asá'*, Brazil 1983, p.59

<sup>119</sup> Summons §91, p.49

<sup>120</sup> *Min Makátib* p.44, in allusion to Q 17:1

In this paragraph the Aqsa Mosque is given an even higher distinction than that it receives in Islam. Alluding to Q 28:30-32 in which mention is made of “*The Blessed Spot*” on Mount Sinai where God appeared to Moses in a tree and called upon Him to thrust His hand into the bosom of His robe and it came forth “*white*” without hurt, Abdu’l-Bahá associates the Aqsa to that episode, elevating thus the holiness of the place. This paragraph is also significant not only because Abdu’l-Bahá confirms here the Night- journey and the Ascension of the Prophet, but, against what is general belief among Muslims, He makes both events take place at the same spot. In other words, He sees no physical ascension of the Prophet in flesh and blood to heaven. In any case it is obvious to what high esteem the Aqsa Mosque is made mention of in Bahá’í Scriptural Writings and to what degree Bahá’ís must feel sorrow, should any harm be inflicted on it.

The Temple of Solomon mentioned in the following Tablet is in reality the temple erected during the reign of Darius I. (550-486 BCE) after the Jews were released by Cyrus the Great (600-576 BCE) from their Babylonian Captivity. This temple which was restored by Herod the Great during his reign (37-4 BCE) and destroyed by Titus in 70 AD was turned into a garbage dump under Byzantine rule. When Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Muslims in 637, Caliph Umar (634-644) reportedly entered the courtyard in utmost humility and respect and cleaned up the spot with his own robe. A small mosque was then erected on that site and called after him “Umar’s Mosque”, sometimes erroneously applied to the Dome of the Rock.<sup>121</sup> The actual Temple of Solomon, referred to in the following Tablet of Abdu’l-Bahá, which was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BCE is believed to have been erected on that site, although the extensive archeological excavations in recent years have all remained negative.<sup>122</sup>

In a Tablet dated 10 Rabí` I 1338/3 December 1919 addressed to a Persian Bahá’í of Jewish background who must have presumably asked Him about the reconstruction of the Temple, Abdu’l-Bahá declares that this must not be understood as with “*stones and clay*”, as some radical Jews today think, but as something in the “*kingdom of the heart and spirit*”. He observes: “*Oh ye pilgrim of the Holy Land! Thousands and thousands of the Children of Israel have hastened to this blessed spot in order to receive Gods benevolent mercies.*” He then reiterates that they cross deserts and take upon themselves all difficulties to reach their destination and then find nothing but tracks and ruins of what they were longing for, only to sink into endless sorrows and to comfort themselves in what the future might bring. He then exclaims: “*Now two thousand years have passed in this manner and the uppermost ambition is the renewal of Solomon’s Temple, behind the ruined walls of which they wail and lament, shed tears and weep, utter outcries of grief and mourn, and [beseech God to tell them] as to when these walls shall be again erected, whereas all of this is nothing more than stones and clay, not soul and spirit. The Holy of Holies must be established in the kingdom of the heart and spirit. Water and clay mean nothing. Ponder thee upon this for a short while. This endless world includes thousands and thousands of buildings of that kind. As time passes by all have fallen to oblivion. But the Holy of Holies of the soul and the spirit remains ever existing and highly erected. Weigh thee these words in your mind.*” Abdu’l-Bahá then reiterates that these places to where pilgrims go are undoubtedly holy places, but that pilgrims commonly concentrate on “*the water and the clay and not on the spirit and they hold to the lamp but not to the light within*”. He concludes: “*I too want to make my way to those holy spots to smell the fragrance of the Prophets of Israel and spend some days in remembrance of those great men,*

<sup>121</sup> Armstrong 327-333

<sup>122</sup> “Jerusalem Temple”, read in Wikipedia on 26.1.2011

*but I shall be pondering on those pure souls and not on the bodies of clay...*"(own translation)<sup>123</sup>

## 11. The Return of the Jews is Bound to Preconditions

As we have seen, Abdu'l-Bahá was disturbed and distressed to see that Jews coming to the Holy Land were making war preparations for an eventual takeover of the land, and He was dismayed to see that **justice**, the precondition to peace, as He had repeatedly maintained, was being trampled upon and that the Arab population was in agony and fearful for its future.

In principle Abdu'l-Bahá abides by the Divine Promise regarding the Return of the Jews at the End of Times and confirms this on all occasions and to whomever He talks to, regardless of whether they are Arab nationalists like Jamil Effendi al-Jarráḥ, or British politicians, or people of different background. But He also makes it very clear that the Return of the Jews does not mean that this will inevitably happen, but that this is bound to **preconditions** which must first be realized. In a Tablet to another Persian Bahá'í Jew, Mirza Habíbu'l-láh, dated also 10 Rabí` I 1338/3 December 1919 He observes:

*“O ye descendant of His Holiness Abraham. Thank God all prophecies of the Holy Scriptures in regard to [the Children of] Israel, to which also the letters of Abdu'l-Bahá refer, are all coming true. Some have already been fulfilled and others will be fulfilled [in the future]...But this depends on **preconditions** (mashrút): that they [i.e. the Jews] must behave in accordance to the **divine laws**; that they must seek redemption from the darkness of ancient customs and **emancipation from the maladies of their earlier habits**; that they must hold onto what is the spirit of this era and the light of this century; that they **change their behavior** and make it moderate (ta`díl) and that they engage themselves to the utmost in what is to **the benefit of all of mankind** and its relations...and that they **regard all men as God's own flock**, and God as the magnanimous shepherd. Today is the day when ones own way of thinking, whether in regard to individuals or to nations, will inevitably lead to the most great calamity (**nakbat-i kubrá**), and eventually to an all-round loss...It is up to Israel now to get rid of **its sick ideas** and start dealing with matters of universal benefit. Israel's ideas must now be concentrated on matters which are to **everybody's benefit** and for the happiness of all mankind. Success is today a companion to that party which, like the sun, sheds its lights of mercy onto all horizons, and which **tears asunder** (munsalikh) **all personal and nationalist bonds** (taqayyudát-i shakhşí wa millí) resulting from **satanic and evil inspirations** (wasáwis-i shaytániyyah).”* (own translation)<sup>124</sup>

From the contents of this letter it becomes evident:

1. The Return of the Jews is not a free ticket from God, no matter what and no matter how, but dependent on preconditions such as a change of behavior in accordance to divine laws, emancipation from the maladies of old customs and sick ideas of the Jews, as well as their ability of regarding all men, including the Palestinians, as God's own flock.
2. A clear warning by Abdu'l-Bahá that otherwise Jewish immigration will inevitably lead to the most great calamity. It is most interesting that Abdu'l-Bahá uses for this the term *Nakbah*, which ever since 1948 has come to designate the *Catastrophe* of the deportation

<sup>123</sup> Makatib III:361f (own translation)

<sup>124</sup> Makatib III:363f. (own translation)

of the Palestinian people from its land and the loss of its country - a problem of global dimensions which is bringing the world to the brink of an atomic disaster. A problem in great need of a just solution, respecting the interests of both sides.

3. With strongest wording Abdu'l-Bahá exhorts the Zionists, i.e. Jews with nationalist affiliations, to tear asunder these bonds. Nationalism, of whatever kind, is of satanic origins. The trauma which is part of Jewish identity and due to the historical persecutions in the West, and more especially nowadays due to the Holocaust, as well as the trauma which has now also become part of the Palestinian identity due to the *Nakbah* in 1948 and due to the continuous denial of their legal right to return to their homeland and the continuous wars against them, all these traumas are satanic.

But there are **still other preconditions** than the three mentioned in the letter above. One such precondition for the rehabilitation of the Jews as stated by Abdu'l-Bahá is their **acceptance of** the divine origin of the missions of Jesus **Christ** and Prophet **Muhammad**. Unless this is done, He told a Jewish rabbi in the U.S., their **“humiliation will endure forever”**. In a talk given at a synagogue in Washington D.C. on 8 November 1912 He proclaimed to the Jewish audience gathered there the significance of Christ's and Muhammad's missions and reminded them, that it was because of their rejection of Christ that they had faced calamities after calamities throughout history, and invited them to declare their acceptance of Christ, Muhammad and Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>125</sup> In a talk on the following day at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Parsons, Abdu'l-Bahá relates that His address delivered the previous evening at the synagogue had evidently disturbed the rabbi and some members of his community, so much so that they had called upon Him that afternoon. What Abdu'l-Bahá had to say now was of such importance to Him, that He asked the friends gathered at the Parsons' Home **to memorize His words**: *“It was not possible to make the subject completely plain to the rabbi last night, as he was very much pressed for time, but today the opportunity was sufficient for a reconsideration of the statements in detail. I wish you to understand them thoroughly and memorize them in order that you may discourse with the Jews and thus, perchance, become instrumental in leading them aright.”*<sup>126</sup> He then relates His elaborations to the rabbi and his Jewish companions when He had accompanied them for a walk, how He reviewed to them the virtues of Christ, that it was He who had made the Torah part of the Bible and caused the name and prestige of Moses to be widespread and known through the continents of the world, but that the Jews had nevertheless pronounced Him an enemy of Moses. Abdu'l-Bahá then concludes with His words to the rabbi:

*“Consider the troubles and persecutions heaped upon you in Russia for your fanaticism of unbelief. And you must not think that this is ended. **This humiliation will continue forever.** The time may come **when in Europe itself they will arise against the Jews.** But your declaration that Christ was the Word of God will end all such trouble. My advice is that in order to become honorable, protected and secure among the nations of the world, in order that the Christians may love and safeguard the Israelitish people, you should be willing to **announce your belief in Christ, the Word of God.** This is a complete statement; there is nothing more. Is it not thoughtless, ignorant prejudice which restrains you from doing so? Declare that, verily, the Word of God was realized in Him, **and all will be right.**”*<sup>127</sup>

In a similar way He spoke again openly to a Jewish audience at the Temple of Emmanuel in San Francisco on 12 October 1912: *“Why do you not say that Christ was the Word of God?”*

<sup>125</sup> Promulgation 402-410

<sup>126</sup> Promulgation 411

<sup>127</sup> Promulgation 414

*Why do you not speak these few words that will do away with all this difficulty? Then there will be no more hatred and fanaticism, no more warfare and bloodshed in the Land of Promise. Then there will be peace among you forever.*<sup>128</sup> What Abdu'l-Bahá says is clear cut and beyond any doubt. Jews will either have to recognize Christ and Muhammad and their divine mission and gain thus the admiration and respect of all nations, or else be content with the fact that ***“this humiliation will last forever”***.

But beyond these unique theological elaborations and of still greater significance for Abdu'l-Bahá is **justice**, which He had declared a precondition to peace. Again and again He reiterates the uppermost principle of ***“justness and equity toward all nations and people,”***<sup>129</sup> and asks: ***“Is there a greater blessing than this? Freedom! Liberty! Security! These are the great bestowals of God.”***<sup>130</sup> A people which was never involved in the persecution of Jews suffers today the lack of all vital necessities of life: Bread, water and medicine in the great prison which Gaza has become, as well as freedom, liberty and security all over Palestine. To Abdu'l-Bahá all of the preconditions referred to must be fulfilled, ere a rehabilitation of the Jews takes place and peace prevails.

And what is the solution that Abdu'l-Bahá suggests to this all? In the Tablet to Mirza Habíbu'lláh discussed above He exhorts him: ***“Bring my deepest loving regards to all Jewish and Muslim friends in Hamadan, and tell them that Jew and Muslim are worthless terms. My hope is that you should forget all about them, so that the gracious word Bahá'í becomes everyone's designation and so that all differences and contradictions may completely cease and all these metaphoric religious communities (tawá'if-i majáz) may melt like iron in the oven of the love of God and be reshaped into one...”***(own translation)<sup>131</sup>

According to Abdu'l-Bahá, one of the most fatal dilemmas among Jews is that of considering themselves to be “God's Own Chosen People” and all others inferior to them. This is discussed by Abdu'l-Bahá in one of His Paris Talks on 28 October 1911:

*“I was once at Tiberias where the Jews have a Temple. I was staying in a house just opposite the Temple, and there I saw and heard a rabbi speaking to his congregation of Jews, and he spoke thus:*

*‘O Jews, you are in truth the people of God! **All other races and religions are of the devil.** God has created you the descendants of Abraham, and He has showered His blessings upon you. Unto you God sent Moses, Jacob and Joseph, and many other great prophets. These prophets, one and all, were of your race.*

*‘It was for you that God broke the power of the Pharaoh and caused the Red Sea to dry up; to you also He sent manna from above to be your food, and out of the stony rock He gave you water to quench your thirst. **You are indeed the chosen people of God, you are above all the races of the earth! Therefore, all other races are abhorrent to God, and condemned by Him. In truth you will govern and subdue the world, and all men shall become your slaves.***

*‘Do not profane yourselves by consorting with people who are not of your own religion, make not friends of such men.’*

<sup>128</sup> Promulgation p. 368/Majmú`a-i Khitábát II:316/619

<sup>129</sup> Promulgation 390

<sup>130</sup> Promulgation 52

<sup>131</sup> Makátib III:364 (own translation)

*When the rabbi had finished his eloquent discourse, his hearers were filled with joy and satisfaction. It is impossible to describe to you their happiness!*<sup>132</sup>

\* \* \*

It was the purpose of this paper to show that Abdu'l-Bahá was vehemently opposed to the cultural, political and socio-economic penetration of the Middle East by colonialism and imperialism, that He condemned their military expeditions and their invasions of the Eastern countries and designated this as "illegal", and that He, on the other hand, recognized and legalized the peoples right to resist Western inroads and oppressive tyrants (*"If he exercises his anger and wrath against the bloodthirsty tyrants who are like ferocious beasts, it is very praiseworthy"*). It was underlined that He resented all kinds of oppression and aggression on the part of the Colonial Powers and never kept silent about this, but pointed to such acts and put them to discussion nearly on daily basis in His talks or in the daily gatherings at His home, and moreover, that He was offended by the militant and violent methods with which Jewish immigrants were harassing and threatening the Palestinian Arabs in their own country and insisted that the humiliation of Jews would never end before and unless they accept Christ, Muhammad and Bahá'u'lláh and regard all men as God's own flock, and that they would come to the Holy Land, but that they would regret that. Finally it was underlined that He, in spite of the principle of abstaining from political activities and the obligation of obedience to political authorities, sees exceptions to this rule which no longer applies in case of tyranny, oppression and unjust rule.

## Bibliography

### Bahá'í Sources

- Abdu'l-Bahá: Beantwortete Fragen, Bahá'í Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1977
- Khatábát-i Hazrat-i Abdu'l-Bahá (Langenhain) (BRL)
- Khuṭab Abdu'l-Bahá fī Úrúba wa Amríká, Dár al-Ríhání, Beirut 1972
  - Majmu`a-i Khatábát-i Hazrat-i Abdu'l-Bahá, 3 volumes in 1, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Langenhain 1984
- Abdu'l-Bahá: *Makátib*, vol. 3, Farjallah Dhaki Printing Press,( Cairo) 1921
  - Min Makátib Abdu'l-Bahá, Brazil 1982
  - An-núr al-abhá fī mufáwadát Àbdu'l-Bahá. Guftegú bar sar-i náhár, ba-ihtimám-I Clifford Barney, Brill, Leiden 1908
  - Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks (BRL)
  - Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Il. 1982
- Risála-i siásiyya-i Haḍrat-i Abdu'l-Bahá, Tehran 1934 (BRL)
  - Abdu'l-Bahá: The Secret of Divine Revelation, US Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1990 (Bahá'í Reference Library, BRL)
  - Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, U.S.Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1990 (BRL)
- Alwáh ḥadrat Bahá'u'lláh ilá al-mulúk wa al-ru'asá', Brazil 1983
- Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 1993
- The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh to the Kings and Leaders of the World, Bahá'í World

<sup>132</sup> Paris Talks p.46; Khatábát-i Hazrat-i Abdu'l-Bahá (Langenhain) (BRL) I:79f./85f.

- Center, Haifa 1972
- Bahá'u'lláh: The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, Bahá'í World Center, Haifa 2002 (BRL)
  - Bahá'u'lláh: Súriy-i-Ra'ís, in: The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, Bahá'í World Center, Haifa 2002 (BRL)
  - Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i Aqdas, US Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1988 (BRL)
  - Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, US Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1979 (BRL)
  - Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh (BRL)

### Other Sources

- Amr va Khalq, vol. 3, compiled by Fazel Mazandarani, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Langenhain 1986
- Abd al-Husain Áwáreh: al-Kawákib al-durriyyah fí ma'áthir al-bahá'íyyah, vol.2, Matba'at al-Sa'ádah, (Cairo)1914
- Zia Baghdadi: al-rihla al-baghdádiyya, copy of a manuscript kept at the Bahá'í Archives in Haifa, vol I:145,158; II:187
- Habib Mu'ayyad: Khátirát-i Habíb, Bahá'í National Publishing Trust, (Tehran) 125 BA
- Mahmúd Zarqání: Badáyiü'l-Áthár, 2 vols., Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Langenhain 1982

### Other

- Fikret Adanir: The Ottomans and the Balkans. A discussion of historiography, Brill, Leiden 2002.
- Necati Alkan: “*The Young Turks and the Baha'is in Palestine*“, in: Y.B.-B and E. Ginio (eds.): Late Ottoman Palestine. The Period of Young Turc Rule, I.B.Tauris, London 2011, pp.258-278
- Karen Armstrong: Jerusalem, die heilige Stadt, Orbis Verlag, München 1999
- H.M.Balyuzi: 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, George Ronald, Oxford 1987
- Lenni Brenner: Zionism in the Age of Dictators. A reappraisal, Croom Helm, London and Canberra 1983
- John Bunzl: Israel und die Palästinenser. Die Entwicklung eines Gegensatzes, Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, Wien 1982
- The Cambridge History of Islam, vol. 1, edited by P.M.Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1970
- Kamran Ekbal: “*Ihsánu'lláh Khán Dústdár, die Kaukasischen Revolutionäre und die Gründung der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepublik Iran 1920-1921*“, in: Osmanismus, Nationalismus und der Kaukasus. Muslime und Christen, Türken und Armenier im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, hg. Von Fikret Adanir und Bernd Bonwetsch, Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 2005, pp.237-252
- Kamran Ekbal: “*Bagdadi Family*“, in: Encyclopaedia Iranica, online edition, February 2014
- Kamran Ekbal: “*Murúri bar alwáh-i hazrat-i Bahá'u'lláh khatáb ba Muhammad Mustafá Baghdádi*“, in: Safína-i Írfán 4, Darmstadt 2001, pp.192-202
- Kamran Ekbal: “*taqiyya und kitmán in den Bábí und Bahá'í Religionen*“, in: Akten des 27. Deutschen Orientalistentages. Norm und Abweichung, herausgegeben von Stefan Wild und Hartmut Schild, Ergon Verlag, Würzburg 2001, pp. 363-372

- Kamran Ekbal: “*tajaddud dar misr wa Iran dar qarn-i núzdahum-i míládí dar rábita bá fikr-i Bábí wa Bahá’í*”, in: Khúsha-há’í az Kharman-i Adab wa Hunar 16, 2008, pp. 168-194
- Kamran Ekbal: “*Abdu’l-Bahá, melliyyat-gará’í wa hehrrat-i yahúdiyán bih Filistín*”, án Nameh, vol. 27, Number 4, 2012, pp. 86-119
- Kamran Ekbal: “*taqiyyah, sitr wa kitmán dar diyánat-há-i Bábí wa Bahá’í*”, in: Iran Nameh, vol. 28. Number 3, Autumn 2013, pp. 170-193
- Abdu’l-Hamid Eshraq-Khavari: Payám-i Malakút, Iranian Bahá’í Publishing Trust (Tehran) 130 B.E
- J.E. Esslemont: Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era, US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980 ed. (BRL)
- David Fromkin: A Peace To End All Peace. Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922, Penguin Books, London 1991
- Ulrich Haarmann (ed.): Geschichte der arabischen Welt, C.H.Beck, München 1991
- Albert Hourani: A History of the Arab Peoples, Harvard University Press and Warner Books, Cambridge, Mass. 1991
- A.W.Kayyali: Palestine. A Modern History, Croom Helm, London, n.d.
- Hushang Khazrá’í: “*Bar’ámadan-i sitára-i sepíde-dam-i rúz-i Khodá*”, in: Payám-i Bahá’í 371, October 2010, pp.2 and 8-10
- Friedrich H. Kochwasser: “*Das Deutsche Reich und der Bau der Bagdad-Bahn*“, in: Friedrich H. Kochwasser und Hans R. Roemer (eds.): Araber und Deutsche. Begegnungen in einem Jahrtausend, Tübingen und Basel 1974, pp. 294-349
- Walter Laqueur: Der Weg zum Staat Israel. Geschichte des Zionismus, Europaverlag, Wien 1972
- Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot: Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1984
- Moojan Momen (ed.): The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions, 1844-1944, George Ronald, Oxford 1981
- Saleh Mowlavinejad: “*Mo’arrefi-i kitáb*”, in: Payám-i Bahá’í 365, April 2010
- Ilan Pappé: The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, Oneworld Publications, Oxford 2006
- Edward W. Said: Orientalism, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978
- Nader Saidi: “*Bahá’í-setízí va ittihám-i Bahá’iyán be jásúsí*”, in: Payám-i Bahá’í 357, August/September 2009, pp. 25-30
- Oliver Paul Scharbrodt: Reconciling Religious Dissidence in the Baha’i Faith and in the Salafiyya. A comparative study of `Abdul-Baha `Abbas (1844-1921) and Muhammad `Abduh (1849-1905). A dissertation submitted to the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies
- Alexander Schölch: “*Der arabische Osten im neunzehnten Jahrhundert 1800-1914*”, in: Geschichte der Arabischen Welt, herausgegeben von Ulrich Haarmann, C.H.Beck, München 1991, pp. 365-431
- Reinhard Schulze: Geschichte der islamischen Welt im 20. Jahrhundert, C.H.Beck, München 1994
- Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw: History Of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, 2 vols., vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge etc. 1977
- William Morgan Shuster: The Strangling of Persia. Story of the European diplomacy and Oriental intrigue that resulted in the denationalization of twelve million Muhammedans. Personal narrative, (New York)1939, repr. 1968
- Luigi Stendardo: Leo Tolstoy and the Bahá’í Faith, George Ronald, Oxford 1985
- Bassam Tibi: Nationalismus in der Dritten Welt am arabischen Beispiel, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt am Main 1971